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**Ambiguous *Bikās*:**  
**History of the Concept of Development in Nepal**  
**1900–2006**

**Bandana Gyawali**

**ACADEMIC DISSERTATION**

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## ABSTRACT

Development, an ambiguous sociopolitical concept, has become entrenched in the imaginations and vocabulary of the people of Nepal for decades. Its Nepali translation, *bikās*, is commonly believed to have come into existence with the American Point Four assistance in 1951, followed by a plethora of technical and financial assistance offered by various countries. That development is to be achieved mainly through foreign-aided interventions that will ultimately propel the country to economic prosperity and social wellbeing akin to the West is the dominant view in Nepal. Such a view makes development a fairly recent phenomenon. It also makes development a concept that is ahistorical. This study is an attempt to refute such ahistoricity. It explores the history of the modern sociopolitical concept of development as it was adopted in Nepal in the late Rana period of the 1920s and was semantically augmented in the successive political periods right up to the end of the Maoist 'People's War' in 2006.

Being a conceptual history, it studies *bikās* diachronically and synchronically. Diachronically, it pursues the concept across almost a century to trace continuities and discontinuities in the semantics of *bikās*, while synchronically it pauses at each political period and reflects on how *bikās* has been understood at a particular historical juncture. In other words, this study explores how the concept carries elements from the past, assimilates into the present and projects into the future. Apart from the methodological prerequisites of pairing diachronic and synchronic approaches, this study also takes into consideration the onomasiology and semasiology of *bikās*. It explores parallel expressions around *bikās* such as the ideas of *unnati* and *pragati* (both denoting progress) and of *sabhyatā* (civilization) and teases out their semantic layers.

This historical study focuses extensively on written data, with interviews supplementing it only when required. Official correspondences, newspapers, dictionaries, books and booklets, pamphlets, etc., that survive at the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Kathmandu, the Nepal National Library at Harihar Bhavan in Kathmandu, and the National Archives of India in New Delhi have informed this study. For recent historical contents, the sources used were books published from 1990 to 2013 and digital archives such as the Digital Himalaya and the website of the National Planning Commission, accompanied by occasional interviews.

However, this is not just a semantic history of *bikās* or an attempt to trace the changing meaning of a sociopolitical concept. The evolution of *bikās* as a concept is tied to socio-structural transformations. This is because conceptual change, a slow process when compared to the fast pace of political changes or even the gradual pace of social changes, occurs through accumulated meanings resulting from political and social changes. A result of the reciprocity of conceptual and sociopolitical changes is that while Nepal's sociopolitical transformations from the 1950s to the present have contributed to the semantic expansion of *bikās*, such an expansion has, in turn, facilitated sociopolitical transformations – in this case, deepening of democracy in Nepal. Outlining this reciprocity between sociopolitical transformations and conceptual changes in *bikās* is the aim of this research.

Keywords: Nepal, development, *bikās*, *unnati*, *pragati*, *sabhyatā*, concept, history, sociopolitical transformations.

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## CHRONOLOGY

1814–1816	The Anglo-Gurkha war
1816	Ratification of the Treaty of Sugauli between the Gurkha kingdom and the East India Company
1846	The Kot Massacre
1846–1877	Reign of prime minister Jang Bahadur Rana
1850	Prime Minister Jang Bahadur's visit to England and France
1854	Promulgation of <i>Muluki Ain</i> , the legal code
1901 (Mar–Jun)	Reign of Maharaja Dev Shamsher
1901–1929	Reign of Maharaja Chandra Shamsher
1914–1918	Nepal aids British India during the First World War by supplying men and materials
1925	Abolition of slavery
1929–1932	Reign of Maharaja Bhim Shamsher
1932–1945	Reign of Maharaja Juddha Shamsher
1934	The Great (Nepal-Bihar) Earthquake
1936	Formation of the Nepal Praja Parishad
1937	The first industrial exhibition
1939	The second industrial exhibition
1939	Juddha Shamsher provides assistance to Britain during the Second World War
1940	Dispersal of anti-Rana leaflets by Nepal Praja Parishad
1940–1941	Arrest, trial and execution of prominent members of Nepal Praja Parishad
1944	The third industrial exhibition
1944	The <i>Audyōgik Namunā</i> Survey (experimental survey of industries and economy) conducted
1945	A second nation-wide survey to assess Nepal's prospects for <i>unnati</i>
1945	British India announces a present of two million rupees in perpetuity to Nepal in recognition of the assistance rendered by Nepal during the two world wars
1945–1948	Reign of Maharaja Padma Shamsher
1947	Formation of Nepali National Congress
1947	Diplomatic relation established between Nepal and the United States
1947–1949	Anti-Rana activities under the banner of Nepali National Congress
1949	Formation of Communist Party of Nepal
1950	Nepali Congress formed by merging Nepali National Congress and Nepal Democratic Congress
1950	Treaty of Peace and Friendship and Treaty of Trade and Commerce signed with India
1950 Sep– 1951 Jan	Various anti-Rana activities carried out by Nepali Congress with the support of King Tribhuvan, who sought sanctuary in India
1951 Feb	The Delhi compromise brokered by India between the Ranas, Nepali Congress and King Tribhuvan, ending 104 years of Rana rule
1951	The Interim Government of Nepal Act or the interim constitution comes into effect

1951 Jan	Nepal signs the Point Four Agreement with the United States
1952	The United States Technical Cooperation Mission established
1955	Death of King Tribhuvan
1956	The first Five-year Plan initiated
1955–1972	Reign of King Mahendra
1959	Promulgation of a new constitution
1959	General elections
Feb–Apr	
1959 May	B.P. Koirala of Nepali Congress elected as prime minister
1960 Dec	Direct rule by King Mahendra and the beginning of the Panchayat system
1962	Promulgation of a new constitution under the Panchayat system
1972	Death of King Mahendra
1972–2001	Reign of King Birendra
1973	King Birendra proposes Nepal as a Zone of Peace
1980	Referendum on the future of the Panchayat system held, which favored a reformed Panchayat instead of a multiparty system
1987	Nepal's request for Structural Adjustment Program approved
1989	India imposes economic blockade on Nepal
1990	Movement for restoration of democracy, or the 'People's Movement'
Feb–Apr	
1990 Apr	Dissolution of Rastriya Panchayat and Krishna Prasad Bhattarai appointed as prime minister
1990 Nov	Promulgation of constitution ensuring multi-party system
1991 Jan	Establishment of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist), or CPN (UML)
1991 May	General elections and the formation of Nepali Congress government under the leadership of Girija Prasad Koirala
1992–1997	The Eighth Plan period
1994	General elections and the formation of the CPN (UML) government under the leadership of Manmohan Adhikari
1995	Birth of the CPN (Maoist) after many splits and mergers
1996	The CPN (Maoist) launches 'People's War'
1998–2002	The Ninth Plan
2001 Feb	CPN (Maoist) adopts 'Prachanda Path' at the party's second national conference
2001 Jun	Royal palace massacre
2006	The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed by the CPN (Maoist) and the Seven Party Alliance bringing the 'People's War' to an end
2008	Elections for a constituent assembly held, with CPN (Maoist) victorious



## GLOSSARY

<i>a-bikās / a-bikasit</i>	lack of development / underdeveloped
<i>ain</i>	code
<i>alpa-bikasit</i>	less developed
<i>Aṅgrej</i>	British
<i>amlekh</i>	manumission
<i>ārthik</i>	economic
<i>asabhya</i>	uncivilized
<i>audyogik</i>	industrial
<i>ava-unnnati</i>	lack of progress
<i>bādśāh</i>	emperor
<i>bhāṣā / bhāsā</i>	language
<i>bhāṣonnati</i>	progress of language
<i>bikās</i>	development
<i>bikās unmukh</i>	developing
<i>bikasit</i>	developed
<i>bīr / vīr</i>	brave
<i>des unnati</i>	progress of the country
<i>grām bikās</i>	community development / village development
<i>jamindār</i>	landowning class
<i>jansevā</i>	server of the people
<i>jāti</i>	race, ethnicity
<i>kamaiyā</i>	bonded laborer
<i>kariyā</i>	slave
<i>maulik</i>	native
<i>morcā</i>	organized group of protestors; protest rally
<i>muluk</i>	country
<i>Muluki Ain</i>	civil code
<i>naulo janavād</i>	new people's democracy
<i>nirmāṇ</i>	construction
<i>parivartan</i>	change
<i>pragati / pragatiśīl</i>	progress / progressive
<i>prajā</i>	citizen
<i>prajātāntrik</i>	democratic
<i>raiti</i>	subjects
<i>rājnitik sacetanā</i>	political consciousness
<i>Rastriya Panchayat</i>	National Panchayat
<i>sabhya / sabhyatā</i>	civilized / civilization
<i>sabhya des</i>	civilized country
<i>sabhya saṃsār</i>	civilized world
<i>sacetanā</i>	self-realization
<i>samājvād</i>	socialism

<i>samiti</i>	committee
<i>saṃskṛti</i>	culture
<i>sati</i>	practice of the wife immolating on her husband's funeral pyre
<i>slok</i>	poetic meter used in Vedic poetry
<i>udyog</i>	industry
<i>Udyog Pariṣad</i>	Commission For Industry, also called the Development Board
<i>unnat / unnati</i>	progressive / progress
<i>v.s.</i>	Vikram Samvat; Hindu calendar used in Nepal, starting in 56–57 BC.
<i>vikās</i>	same as <i>bikās</i> , development
<i>yojanā</i>	plan

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## NOTES ON TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSLATION

Words in Nepali and other languages of Nepal, mainly Newari and Sanskrit, have been transliterated from Devnagari according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) method, except that the *candra bindu* has been replaced by “ṁ” (m with a dot above).

Unless mentioned otherwise, all translations are mine. I have added *italics* with diacritical marks for non-English words even inside quotes.

## CHAPTER I: WHAT IS *BIKĀS*?

What is *bikās*? There have been many answers to this question. This study argues that *bikās*, the Nepali translation for the term development, is a sociopolitical concept. This, however, begs a second question: What is a sociopolitical concept? A sociopolitical concept is ambiguous, fluid and regenerative. In the case of *bikās*, capacious targets such as industrialization, basic needs, poverty alleviation, sustainable development, human development, etc., cloak the concept with an ambiguity that defeats any attempt to garner a precise definition. Its fluidity is precisely the result of this ambiguity since it allows development to accommodate under every new circumstance. Its endurance is due to its fluidity and ambiguity since they assist it in becoming endlessly regenerative. As a practice and theory, it is subject to criticism, revision and sometimes rejection, examples of which we have aplenty. However, as with all social and political concepts, development is forward looking and continues to remain relevant in spite of misgivings.

This study stems from the premise that sociopolitical concepts are not static and insulated from the currents of time. It is a common misunderstanding that concepts such as *bikās* are contemporary and have no history to them. On the contrary, concepts are a queer mix of the old and the new. They point to the future but are also citadels of the past. A concept will contain multiple layers, each bearing currents of a particular period. As such, a conceptual history is not simply semantic history or the attempt to trace the changing meaning of a sociopolitical concept. It is more than that. The evolution of a concept is tied to socio-structural transformations. This is because conceptual change, a slow process when compared to the fast pace of political changes or even the gradual pace of social changes, occurs through accumulated meanings resulting from political and social changes. In studying *bikās* synchronically and diachronically, this study denies the ahistoricity of *bikās* and instead maps socio-structural changes in Nepal from the Rana era to the end of the Maoist ‘People’s War.’

Conventionally, Nepal was looked upon as a fresh slate for development intervention, the practice believed to have entered the country only after the political changes of 1951. Contrary to such views, this study considers concepts parallel to development to be in existence in Nepal much earlier than 1951, during the era of the Rana prime ministers. However, when used by the Ranas and their subjects, parallel concepts such as *unnati* and *pragati* (both referring to progress) were slightly different from the modern concept of *bikās*. The discourse surrounding *pragati* and *unnati* in Rana Nepal had a purpose and an audience that was not similar to the discourse of *bikās*. Nevertheless, they were precursors to the concept of *bikās*. This study does not confuse the modern concept of *bikās* with the Rana notions. What it does is to propose that *bikās* did not simply emerge with Nepal’s ‘opening up’ in 1951 but has an earlier precedence.

This precedence was forgotten with the herald of a new political arrangement: parliamentary democracy. Accompanying this new setup was the slow ascendancy of the word *bikās*. It was used to describe economic and social promises that were believed to be the elements of democracy. The ties between development and democracy too were quickly forgotten with the political changes of 1961. But in spite of this amnesia, *bikās* continued its ascendancy, replacing parallel words *unnati* and *pragati* with which it had competed during the Rana and immediate post-Rana years. From the 1990s onwards, *bikās* moved away from being primarily the state’s concern to one that was interpreted and challenged on different fronts by its many stakeholders. Among them was the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), a non-parliamentary force challenging the kind of development that, according to them, perpetuated the development of underdevelopment. Thus, from 1996 onwards, the concept of development shifted in keeping with the ideological legacy of the communists in Nepal, a fact that would be missed had it not

been for the diachronic and historical nature of the study of concepts. This study, spanning almost a century from the Ranas to the Maoists, attempts to uncover some of the layers that comprise the concept of *bikās* using the methods of *Begriffsgeschichte*, or history of concepts.

### 1.1 Research objectives and research question

The overall objective of this study is to provide a historical account of the concept of *bikās*, or development, in order to trace conceptual changes within it over the past century. More specifically, the aim is to explore what makes *bikās* a modern sociopolitical concept and to examine the semantic imprints that have been cast onto it at various political epochs. I study the concept synchronically, at a particular moment in history, in order to contextualize *bikās* and to elaborate the purpose for which it was used. Simultaneously, I look at the concept diachronically, across a historical spectrum from the early 1900s to 2006, in order to understand its semantic changes. The focus of such a synchronic and diachronic analysis is centered mainly on *bikās*, but with due emphasis on parallel concepts as and when they appear. However, this study is not limited to semantic explorations. By historicizing the modern concept of *bikās*, it attempts to understand the nature of Nepal's sociopolitical transformation.

The central research question that the thesis addresses is as follows: How has Nepal's transition from Rana autocracy in the first half of the 1900s towards a democratic polity beginning in 1950 but ongoing even today led to semantic changes within *bikās* such that *bikās* has evolved into a modern sociopolitical concept? Or what multiple, contested and controversial meanings condensed into and layered *bikās* such that it transformed from an unambiguous word to an ambiguous concept that was able to remain relevant to Nepal's political language in spite of the various sociopolitical transformations. Further specific questions are:

- How was the future – the upcoming age – conceived of and described in 'traditional', Rana-era Nepal?
- To what extent does the transition from Rana autocracy to democracy in 1950 reveal continuities as well as discontinuities in such perceptions of the future?
- What effect did the various political periods of modern Nepal have upon *bikās*?
- When, why and how did the leap from *bikās* as a word to *bikās* as an ambiguous concept occur, and what does this metamorphosis reveal about Nepal's sociopolitical and economic developments across different political periods?
- What does such a conceptual history of *bikās* reveal of the nature of Nepal's social and political transformations?

### 1.2 Background to the research

*Bikās* is assumed to be of recent origin in ideation as well as in practice, and its history does not begin a day earlier than January 1951, when the American government extended the Point Four assistance to Nepal (Mihaly 2009[1965]; Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979]; Skerry et al. 1991; Khadka 1997; Pandey 1999). Concomitantly, *bikās* is associated with a set of interventions beginning with the Tribhuvan Gram Bikas Program and the Block Development Program in the 1950s, the sectoral approach in the sixties, the Integrated Rural Development in the seventies, decentralization in the eighties and structural adjustment and I/NGO-initiated development in the nineties. That *bikās* is to be achieved mainly through interventions by institutions and their foreign experts has been the dominant view within Nepal. Additionally, *bikās* is associated with material aspirations of a modernizing country and is measured by a quantitative increase in roads, hospitals, schools, communication, public as well as private services, and an overall improvement in the material quality of life (Pigg 1992, 1993; Des Chene 1996; N.R. Shrestha 1998 and S. Sharma 2001).

However, the historical beginnings of aid emerge ahead of the American Point Four Program and the political goals tied to Cold War settings. Such ‘cooperation’ had precedence in the days of the waning British Raj when Nepal assisted Britain in both the world wars by providing Gurkha recruits as well as assisting with money and materials on various occasions, for which the country was ‘gifted’ an annual present of one million rupees in perpetuity in order to keep Nepal within the orbits of British Indian influences. Most literature describing the beginnings of development cooperation in Nepal do not take this fact into account. An exception is Khadka (1997). In discussing the preludes to Nepal’s foreign assistance, he differentiates economic from military ‘aid’, claiming that the latter was Nepal’s forte before 1951.<sup>1</sup> However, Khadka does not trace this exchange to the earliest emergence of the idea of development in Nepal. It was, in fact, British Indian extension of ‘post war reconstruction and development’ efforts to Nepal in 1945 that led to the adoption of ‘development’ as a political goal years before the American mission’s arrival.

Hence, as a concept, *bikās* has received no attention and is supposedly ahistorical and inert. *Bikās* is thought to be a complete break with the past, one that lacks historical continuity with the previous era. Such a conception is the result of a long precedence established by the earliest development ‘projects’, such as those launched with American assistance, which earnestly believed in the ability to improve Nepal within a short period provided rapid transfer of knowledge and technology that was consequently believed to inaugurate a completely new age that sustained on technological adoption (Mihaly 2009[1965]). The first of such programs, the Village Development Project, assumed that imparting six-month training to men at a training center in Kathmandu, who would, in turn, facilitate further training at the provincial centers, would cumulatively result in the spread of technology and *bikās* across rural Nepal. This view that rural Nepal could accelerate towards modernity if it were provided with technological and economic support, collectively called development, from those nations which were already modern or were modernizing was strengthened by other actors in the aid arena as well.

Apart from the United States, India and China were other significant actors in the 1950s. Indian assistance to Nepal began almost simultaneously with American assistance and is understood to be a response to American presence in what India considered to be its own backyard (ibid). Hence, India rushed to lay claim to Nepal’s development through aid in infrastructure development, such as the Tribhuvan Highway and the Gauchar Airport (Tribhuvan International Airport) in Kathmandu. Although such assistance, formalized under the Indian Aid Mission in 1954, was a part of India’s strategic interests, it also fostered the belief that *bikās* is akin to technological and infrastructural ‘projects’.

In 1956 China granted Nepal cash and commodities as well as the freedom to use these in any way Nepal preferred and kept its promise of not interfering in the administration of this grant. Nepal mainly absorbed the cash grant to finance American development projects. China’s non-conditional development pledge to Nepal in the early days was an exception in the interventionist approach that most aid providers have had. Other participants in Nepal’s development scene after the mid-1950s, such as the World Health Organization working on malaria eradication, the Ford Foundation working in the revival of cottage industry and the Swiss working on dairy and cheese making, were, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Khadka cites instances of Nepal’s military assistance to British India to quell the Sipoy Mutiny in 1857, the military assistance provided during the British Younghusband Mission of 1903–1904, the supply of a staggering number of Gurkha soldiers, arms, ammunitions and even cash during the two world wars as well as the supply of Nepali troops to independent India to quell the crisis in Hyderabad and Kashmir in 1948 (Khadka 1997: 92–93).

committed to promoting *bikās* through technological interventions and simultaneously promoting *bikās* as a technology-driven foreign phenomenon.

*Bikās* continued to be associated with such interventions and economic increments in the subsequent decades alongside an expanding aid portfolio.<sup>2</sup> Although global shifts in development approaches had repercussions in Nepal, *bikās* remained tied to the country's attempts to climb the GDP ladder. As a result, economic fluctuations were minutely monitored, based on which Nepal's *bikās* was moored to a particular rank in the global economic hierarchy. However, macroeconomic definitions of *bikās* gradually came to be a source of angst, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s.

At a seminar in 1983, the director of the Integrated Development System (IDS), a private institute established in 1979 to carry out research on development and related issues, concluded with a statement that questioned the efficacy of aid for development while also suggesting its termination, given that in spite of being the beneficiary of nearly four decades of foreign aid there was little evidence of betterment (IDS 1983). The statement received much publicity and also generated some introspection on the impacts of development in Nepal in the following decade. However, the death of development cooperation remained a hyperbole since foreign aid continues to be, as the overused metaphor in Nepali development literature puts it, a trickle turning into a torrent with even greater vigor. Nevertheless, such an incitement was among the earliest in the move towards critical engagements with *bikās* in the 1990s.

Among the critics of *bikās*, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) stands out. The decade-long armed insurrection initiated by the party was based on what they called their 'Marxist-Leninist-Maoist' assessment of Nepal's 'underdevelopment' and class relations. In spite of the political optimism of the early 1990s, Nepal continued to rank low in the hierarchy of nations with its economic indicators limping feebly, with unemployment skyrocketing while also revealing early signs of a large exodus of young men and women from impoverished backgrounds as manual workers to countries in the Middle East. Although the Maoist war exacerbated this exodus from Nepal's hinterlands, the Maoists were able to tap into the grievances of marginalized ethnic communities to launch an attack on the state. They claimed that an iniquitous 'semi-feudal, semi-colonial' state had continued to neglect the rural hinterlands and its residents over the more accessible centers in Kathmandu and certain other parts of Nepal. Such an iniquitous and 'feudal' state was, according to the Maoists, the cause of Nepal's underdevelopment.

Maoist criticism of development was certainly a departure from the euphoria that was associated with it in the past decades. However, this criticism was short-lived, since the government formed by the victorious Maoist party in 2008 was quick to revert to development as something that depended on foreign assistance. The Maoist-led government, like others before, was high on rhetorical enthusiasm to 'bring' development to Nepal while simultaneously turning to external assistance from the more advanced countries in the form of finances and technological knowhow. This is in keeping with the preconceptions that development is of Western origins. But to what extent is it Western? Concepts are not static, they are very much alive and able to imbibe, to give and take from the sociopolitical events within which they operate. This study is an attempt to sift the concept of development; it is an attempt to understand how a supposedly Western idea is absorbed and utilized to fulfill sociopolitical and economic goals in a non-Western context.

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<sup>2</sup> By early 1960s, Nepal's aid portfolio had expanded significantly with countries such as the United States, India, China, Switzerland, Soviet Union, Israel, West Germany, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and the United Nations and other agencies such as the Ford Foundation contributing to the aid basket, while the seventies witnessed the entry of several multilaterals into the aid scene (S. Sharma 2009[2003]).



### 1.3 Framework of the research

The main debates within development literature in Nepal can be categorized broadly into (a) development as foreign-aided projects, and (b) development as a series of unintended consequences. A third category that looks at *bikās* or its parallel – progress (*unnati*) – as an idea or a concept is nonexistent in spite of the presence of such in non-Nepali academic literature. This section will survey the first two categories as well as discuss the third in connection with the study of concepts.

#### 1.3.1 Development as foreign-aided projects

Although development carries positive connotations, its impacts have been discussed in less glorious terms than the image it conjures. This is attested by the literature on development in Nepal, many of which consistently decry the failures of ‘development projects’, some success notwithstanding, and hence the overall failure of foreign-aided development. Here I will sample some of this literature in order to provide a broad overview of what is expected from and understood of the slippery and ambiguous term *bikās*. With such an overview, I aim to highlight the dominant perceptions of *bikās* as short-term, calibrated projects financed by foreign aid.

Within the corpus of academic writings, from the earliest such as Mihaly 2009[1965] and Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979] to the more recent ones such as Acharya (2002) and Ghimire (2014), the trend has been to evaluate and critique the various meandering turns of development cooperation and foreign aid, with most concluding that aid has had questionable impacts on development. Mihaly 2009[1965] discusses the failure of the American projects of the late fifties, such as the American anti-malaria and seed testing projects, the Regional Transport Organization—a joint project attempted by the Americans and the Indians to develop Nepal’s transport sector—and the partial failure of the American-led Rapti Valley Project and the suspension bridge project. Mihaly suggests that Nepal was not socioeconomically or politically ready for change and did not have a political setup that was able to administer development, and hence the failure. Similarly, Stiller and Yadav review the success or not of foreign aid-inspired planning and development, arguing that the zeal for ‘econometrics’ within the planning machinery had impeded development.

Similarly, the less than promising impacts of development on various projects operating in the early eighties are discussed in IDS (1983). Among its contributors, Banskota (1983) discusses the lukewarm impacts of the 1982/83 projects such as the Koshi Hill Area Development Project, the Rasuwa-Nuwakot Project, the Integrated Hill Development Project, and the Rapti Zone Rural Development Project. Pradhan and I. Shrestha (1983) provide similar appraisals of the Integrated Rural Development Project, Community Forest Development Project, and the Watershed Management Project, particularly in connection with Women in Development. Pant (1983) discusses the lackluster of agricultural projects such as the Chitwan Irrigation Project and the Integrated Cereal Project. Although not focusing on particular projects, B.K. Shrestha (1983) and Pandey (1983) in the same volume are equally disapproving of Nepal’s development achievements.

Skerry et al. (1991) evaluate American assistance to Nepal and admit that development targets have not been satisfactory. However, they stop short of assessing why. A slightly different take is present in Khadka (1997), which looks at the connection between foreign policy and aid with regards to Indian and Chinese interests in Nepal. Khadka’s argument is that foreign aid plays an important role in securing strategic interest not only for India and China but for the United States as well.

Although Bhattachan and Mishra’s anthology (1997) is not exclusively concerned with foreign-aided projects and instead breaks down development practices into state led, market led, I/NGO led, and community led, most of the articles included express dissatisfaction over these practices. Among these are Guru-Gharana (1997), B. Shrestha (1997) and S.P. Sharma (1997), who examine the role of the state

and the market and voice caution against unbridled enthusiasm for liberalization. In the same book, Acharya (1997) is optimistic about the role that I/NGOs can play in development at the grassroots but also highlights the lack of transparency in resource mobilization, which has had a detrimental effect on the image and the work of these bodies in Nepal. Bhattachan (1997) highlights the activities of indigenous organizations such as *dhikur* (credit-providing associations), *guṭhi* (communal and religious land tenure associations), *rodi* (community organizations of Gurungs), *bhejā* (communal associations dealing with socioeconomic and legal matters among Magars) and the *dharma panchayat* (religious councils). He argues that these have been in existence in Nepal since the eighteenth century and have functioned efficiently as opposed to the numerous concocted ‘putting the last first’ approaches after the mid-1980s. Most of the writings discussed above either consider it unnecessary to define development or begin by acknowledging that development is complex and evades a precise definition. However, they unanimously agree that Nepal lacks development, the social and economic indicators of which are provided in plenty. They also associate development with interventions stemming from foreign aid.

### ***1.3.2 Development as unintended consequences***

Within the corpus of writings on *bikās*, there are others that deviate from the exclusive focus on foreign aid and are informative of the multifaceted consequences of development. Prominent among these are Mishra and Sharma (1983), Mishra (1987), Bista (1991), Pigg (1992, 1993), Fujikura (2013), Des Chene (1996), Sharma (2001), Rankin (2004), Koponen and Sharma (2004) and, recently, Gyawali, Thompson and Verweij (2017). This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. However, it represents a corpus that explores the complexities of *bikās*. It presents a discourse that highlights the unintended sociocultural consequences of *bikās*, its economic failures notwithstanding.

Looking at the relationship between foreign aid and social structure, Mishra and Sharma (1983) believe that foreign-aided development has not greatly impacted a society as multilayered as Nepal but has remained an aloof preoccupation of the elites both in Kathmandu and in the hinterlands. They argue that irrespective of the varied approaches, development has always been usurped by tiny elite segments better adept at Western parlance than local practices, which, in turn, has reinforced the power of the upper crust to the detriment of the lower strata. Mishra (1987) discusses the historical process that resulted in Nepal’s peripheral subjugations to the global capitalist economy and resulted in the ‘development of underdevelopment’.

In spite of its questionable methodology and clichés regarding Nepali society, Bista (1991) is a work that is often hailed in *bikās* literature as the earliest native anthropological attempt to explain the lack of development. According to Bista, Nepal’s problems are rooted in the culture of fatalism – the tendency to resign to fate instead of striving to achieve – and to ‘Bahunism’ (*Bāhunbād*) – the entrenchment of the caste hierarchy where the lower caste are at the mercy of the conniving and power-hungry *Bāhuns*, the dominant Hindus. Bista claims that as long as the culture of fatalism and Bahunism remain pervasive, development is not possible. Although some of Bista’s arguments ring true, the conspicuous lack of empirical evidence that can support the links between fatalism and lack of development is a glaring oversight and one which has garnered him notoriety.

Pigg (1992) explains how development alters the meaning of ‘village’ such that it is not a place that is the opposite of a city but a space awaiting the intervention of development. Similarly, Pigg (1993) examines what development constitutes at the village level and concludes that *bikās* is mostly understood in its material avatar as things or commodities external to the local setting. Furthermore, she argues that such a material conception of *bikās* is then deployed to articulate the divide between the modern and the tradition.

Fujikura (1996) examines the American Village Development Project and identifies gaps in knowledge between project executors and local recipients, claiming that the notion of community development, the central idea within the abovementioned program, was far removed from the reality of the villagers for whom it was envisaged and hence a failure. Additionally, Fujikura (2013), of which more will be discussed in later chapters, looks at the ability of development as a discourse to contribute to awareness and to self-awareness. Fujikura claims that in contributing to the manners in which individuals perceive themselves and others, the development discourse also builds towards individual and collective societal transformation. He elaborates this through the case of the movement for emancipation of bonded laborers (*kamaiyā*), a movement he claims emerged from within the development discourse. Unlike Pigg, Fujikura sees development discourse as inclusive of social movements.

Des Chene (1996) compares *bikās* to a capitalist enterprise whose business is to profit and survive by reproducing social inequality. Simultaneously, she also considers *bikās* akin to Nepal's third unification, the first being the geographic, political and administrative unification in the eighteenth century and the second being the cultural unification attained by promoting Nepali language as representative of a unified and homogenous culture in the early twentieth century. The aim of the third unification, Des Chene claims, is to incorporate Nepal into the global community of modern, developed nation-states.

Rankin (2004) challenges the reasoning that a neoliberal market-led approach to development promotes egalitarian opportunities. Rather, she claims, it exacerbates inequality and injustice. Rankin argues that if development is to become effective, it would do well for planners to veer away from the exclusivity of economics and to recognize that planning and development 'locally situates social criticism' (Rankin 2004: 187).

Looking specifically at water supply and sanitation, S. Sharma (2001) proposes that development is closely tied to the notion of modernity. He writes that rural settings that receive the amenities of development, made possible by foreign aid, see themselves as participating in a global discourse not just of water supply and development but of the values enshrined in modernity. Similarly, S. Sharma et al. (2004) examine the impact of Finnish assistance to Nepal, particularly in water supply, sanitation and forestry. It questions the effectiveness of foreign aid, particularly the tendency of donors and the recipient to focus on intended outcomes of development assistance to the exclusion of unintended outcomes. The book argues for the need to take both intended as well as unintended consequences into consideration in order to evaluate the effectiveness of foreign aid. In the same volume, Koponen and S. Sharma (2004) argue that in spite of development aid appearing to be self-evaluative, it often succumbs to donor fads than to lessons from the ground. Gyawali, Thompson and Verweij (2017) takes a 'toad's eye view' of development as against the popular eagle's eye view to argue for plural approaches to development that involve the state, the market and the civil society in engendering socioeconomic solutions that are, unlike the 'over-elegant' schemes of the aid bureaucracy, more 'pluralized' and even 'clumsy' (ibid: 9). While it emphasizes development as a sociopolitical process, this book does not historicize such a process.

### ***1.3.3 Development as idea or concept***

In spite of the absence of research on Nepali intellectual history or on the history of Nepali ideas and concepts, some noteworthy studies emanating from the West deserve mention, particularly on ideas of development and progress that have informed this study. Among the earliest is Nisbet (1980) which maps the genealogy of the Western conception of progress from the Greek and Roman times through early Christian, Medieval and Renaissance periods up to the works of the eighteenth and nineteenth

century thinkers. In the process, he traces the gradual secularization of the idea from its original associations with spiritual and moral betterment.

The concept of progress is also the focus of Koselleck (2002). Koselleck pioneered studies in *Begriffsgeschichte*, or the history of concepts, and his works have greatly shaped this study, as will be elaborated in the subsequent section. Koselleck argues that progress is a modern concept that encapsulates the experiences of a society accelerating into a modern world, a world very different from the bygone era that was dependent on natural biological calibrations. Koselleck sees a discontinuity between the classical notions of progress which he as well as Nisbet claim were based on cyclical rise and fall. Unlike Nisbet, however, Koselleck claims that the modern concept of progress is an attempt to map and make sense of an open and unknown future, a future that is increasingly determined by technological advancements. He argues that the modern concept of progress is unconnected to religious faith and to otherworldly perfection that was believed to be attainable in the Judeo-Christian notions of Christ's Second Coming. In this regard, he contradicts Nisbet's history of progress that is closely tied to Judeo-Christianity and faith in Providence.

Drawing from Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, Koponen (n.d.) examines development as a concept, particularly its endurance in spite of frequent injunctions against its imminent death. Koponen argues that such a durability stems from the presence of certain 'structural features' such as reference to development as a goal or an ideal, as a process of change towards that goal and as an active intervention to make the process happen. Additionally, Koponen argues that it is the interventionist aspect of development that differentiates it from the similar concept of progress.

While this study argues for the endurance of the concept of *bikās*, I search for reasons for its durability in Koselleck (1989), which I discuss at length in chapter six. While Koponen's structural features are applicable to Nepal's *bikās* with the interventionist aspect by the state and non-state agents being most visible post 1950 in chapters three, four and five and with development as process and as intervention being emphasized in chapter six, what differentiates Nepal's *bikās* from that of Koponen's focus is Nepal's non-colonial history. As such, development as intervention did not pass through colonial and anti-colonial rationalization that Koponen discusses. Rather, development as intervention was directly associated with what he describes as a postwar belief symbolizing the common good of all mankind (Koponen n.d.: 12). This study is not an attempt to tease out the structural features of *bikās*. While it explores the meanings associated with development as intervention after the 1950s, the focus remains on the interrelations between persistence and change in meanings and the simultaneous imprints of socio-structural transformations in Nepal.

The colonial context of development is also discussed in Zachariah (2012[2005]). It discusses the genesis of the idea of development in pre-independent India, particularly its conception by the British Raj and its subsequent adoption by the Indian political and intellectual elite. He writes that in India the economic turn in development in the mid-twentieth century was preceded by a tradition grounded in 'stereotypical' Oriental scholarship supporting Britain's right to rule. Prior to the 1920s, theories of racial superiority bolstered British claims, but with the waning of these theories in the West, these supposedly inherent differences were understated. From inherent racial qualities, the discourse shifted to the possibility of 'catching up'. Zachariah writes that in spite of this rephrasing of differences between the British and the Indians, the British continued to argue that India benefitted from colonial rule in terms of 'modernization', 'industrialization' and 'development'. These later arguments were phrased along neutral-sounding economic terms. He also discusses how Indians began contesting British claims through their own notions of development that were as concerned with economics as were with morals. Nisbet and Zachariah have certainly informed this study, but it is the German historian of concepts, Reinhart Koselleck, whose insights and methods have substantially guided this research. Hence, the

next section delves into the theoretical foundations of Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, or conceptual history.<sup>3</sup>

#### 1.4 What is *Begriffsgeschichte*, or history of concepts?

*Begriffsgeschichte*, or history of concepts, has roots in German scholarship, achieving distinction with the publication of the eight-volume *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland* (Basic Concepts in History: A Dictionary on Historical Principles of Political and Social Language in Germany, 1972–1993), henceforth referred to as *GG*. The main proponents of this field of inquiry were Otto Brunner, Werner Conze and Reinhart Koselleck, who were also editors of the *GG*. Among the three scholars, Koselleck survived to witness increasing interest in *Begriffsgeschichte* among non-German scholars with the English translation of his books *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (2002) and *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (2004).

The multi-authored eight-volume *GG* is recognized as the mainstay of history of concepts. This epic compilation was in the making for slightly more than two decades comprising seven thousand pages of texts. Of the proposed 120 concepts, 115 have been discussed in the first seven volumes, with the final and eighth volume containing the index. Richter (1995) classifies these 115 concepts into eight types: 1) political concepts such as state, sovereignty, democracy; 2) social concepts such as family, class, civil society; 3) 'isms' or ideologies such as communism, socialism, anarchism; 4) philosophical concepts such as materialism, idealism; 5) historical concepts such as progress, revolution, crisis; 6) economic concepts such as worker, trade union, capital; 7) legal concepts such as contract, constitution, emergency; and 8) concepts used in international politics such as war, peace, neutrality. It must be emphasized that these are Richter's classifications, and he admits that these categories are not strictly delimiting (Richter 1995).

Koselleck, on the other hand, has classified the 115 concepts of the *GG* into three types, the first being concepts such as democracy that have long been in use and whose meaning today can be related to their earlier usage. The second are concepts such as civil society and state, whose meanings today are very different from their prior historic meanings. Thirdly are neologisms coined during periods of revolutionary transitions (Koselleck 2004: 83).

Why was the need for a history of concepts felt in Germany? What was this method of historical inquiry trying to answer? Melvin Richter provides some answers. Referring to studies by Georg Iggers and Jorn Rusen, Richter charts the topography of German historiography prior to and post 1945. According to him, prior to 1945, German historiography abided by three rules: the state was an end in itself, the historian was not to pass moral judgments on the past, and social structures were no business of historians. Revisions occurred after 1945 which led to the gradual incorporation of military, political and diplomatic history. This was followed by an expansion of German universities and a new generation of historians influenced by critical theory and Marxist history in the early 1960s and mid-1970s. The fetters tying history to great men and their intentions was slowly freed with the final unleashing in 1970 when German history shifted from political and intellectual to social history (Richter 1995: 26–28).

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<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Stacy Leigh Pigg for pointing out the possibilities of further research on the conceptual history of *bikās* benefitting from interdisciplinary engagements with alternative theories of language and meanings such as those by Mikhail Bakhtin on dialogism or with theories on language ideologies common to the anthropological tradition. In its present form, however, this study limits itself to *Begriffsgeschichte* because the method of synchrony and diachrony provide ways of understanding the concept of *bikās* in the *longue durée*. Pigg's suggestions are of value and will be incorporated in future publications.

These events shaped the ideological and intellectual journey of the three contributors of the *GG*. Paraphrasing the words of Koselleck, Richter writes that studies such as the scale of the *GG* arose because ‘concepts register and in part direct the extremely rapid but deep and irreversible transformations in political, social and economic structures which have occurred in Europe since the eighteenth century’ (ibid: 28).

That concepts retain sediments across eras, across traditional and modern periods is demonstrated in Koselleck’s essay ‘Historical Criteria of the Modern Concept of Revolution’ in his 2004 book *Futures Past*. Here he traces the transformation of the concept of revolution from that which initially signified circulation or a return to the point of departure to our modern experience of the concept which implies a complete transformation with unknown consequences. The predictability of the original cyclic revolution gave way to the unpredictable social, political, industrial and technological revolutions, mostly after the French Revolution in 1789.

Koselleck enumerates some features that have characterized the conceptual field of revolutions since the French Revolution. From 1789 onwards, ‘revolution’ condensed into a collective singular and assumed a transcendental significance. Also, the uniform and natural horizon of history with its repeatability and predictability was no longer acceptable after the French Revolution as it threw up possibilities that were previously not known to history. Additionally, after 1789, revolution not only signified a political but also a social revolution. The objective of a political revolution became social emancipation of men and transformation of social structure. Revolution was looked upon as something permanent and to be pursued until the objective was met. Following this permanence of revolution, it also became possible to ‘make’ revolutions, to ‘put together’ revolutions and to manipulate them based on the knowledge about it.

At the core of conceptual history is the idea of the saddle period, or *Sattelzeit*. *Sattelzeit* was a period in German history from 1750–1850 marked by transition from traditional to modern, or what Koselleck calls ‘the dissolution of the old society of orders or estates and the development of the modern world’ (Koselleck 2011: 8). It is in this watershed period, marked by upheavals and restructuring, that concepts register the acceleration of change from an old to a new social order. It is the aim of *Begriffsgeschichte* to trace the movement of concepts from their traditional usage through the *Sattelzeit* to their contemporary usage.

However, a neat bifurcation of time into traditional and modern is not what Koselleck proposes but that ‘rather than treating *modern* simply as *contemporary*, this work explores how modern and old worlds begin to overlap and shift their meanings’ (Koselleck 2011: 8). Koselleck proposes four processes: 1) temporalization, 2) democratization, 3) politicization, and 4) use of concepts to denote ideologies that are characteristics of modern sociopolitical concepts which distinguish them from concepts of the older sociopolitical order (ibid). These four processes are a part of the transition from the old to the modern use of concepts.

The first, temporalization, refers to the tendency of concepts to map, teleologically, modern experience and expectations in terms of stages or periods since ‘circular natural time’ of the pre-modern days is replaced by ‘progressive time in which human reason perfects itself’ (Koselleck 1997: 17). Temporalization is the result of the modern experience of time as dynamic and in constant renewal to perfection. Modern concepts, Koselleck claims, are a response to modern experiences that are no longer explainable through natural metaphors. He writes,

All socio-political concepts encounter a temporal tension which assigns the past and the future in a new way. In other words: the expectations are no longer deduced entirely from hitherto existing

experiences, the experience of the past and the expectations for the future drift apart. This is only another wording for the temporalization which characterizes modern times. (Koselleck 1997]: 20)

The second, democratization, refers to the dispersion of political language and of political concepts among non-elites. As old social order disintegrates, political language escapes the clutches of the dominant class and begins to have a wider currency among people of varied strata. Koselleck calls such dissemination the democratization of concepts since concepts become available to an educated audience that is not limited to aristocracy. For the purpose of this study, political language consists of socio-political concepts or those concepts that carry socio-political resonance. Political language is therefore used here to refer to discourse that is centered on political, social and economic organizations, slogans and concepts that are central to political movements and concepts that are core to political theory as well as ideology (Koselleck 2011: 8).

The third process, politicization, and the fourth, infusion of ideologies into concepts, are similarly tied to the dissolution of old order. As societies become plural with an increasing number of sociopolitical positions that an individual can occupy, there is a tendency to politicize concepts to address this plurality. Similarly, the same concept begins to be used for a variety of ideological purposes and therefore concepts are turned to ideologies that are open ended, ambiguous and able to fit with the plurality of socioeconomic positions. It is with this ideological aspect that single experiences are summed up into a common concept which Koselleck calls the collective singular. Examples are the summing of many individual histories into the collective singular 'history' or of many revolutions into the collective singular 'revolution'.

For Koselleck, all four processes are not equally predominant in every sociopolitical concept. Although *bikās* exhibits these processes to varying degrees, this study focuses on the democratization of *bikās* which began in the 1950s and was widespread by the 1990s. In Nepal, the democratization of political language in the Koselleckian sense and the political process of democratization reciprocate one another. Or an increased access of political language among the non-elites and the deepening of democracy are reciprocal processes. However, the politicization of *bikās* and its incorporation into ideologies also become evident by the 1990s and augmented Koselleckian democratization. Although this study does not track politicization and ideologization as persistently as democratization, these are briefly dealt with in chapter five. Koselleck's idea of temporalization is briefly discussed in the concluding chapter.

Any attempt to pinpoint the Nepali equivalent of the German *Sattelzeit*, a period of revolutionary transformations that seeped into the deepest sociopolitical and economic veins of Europe, is a daunting task. For, has Nepal witnessed such sweeping transformations that have challenged 'traditional' modes of governance, economy and social order to make way for 'modernity'? Is there a point in Nepali history where some form of dichotomy appears between the traditional and the modern? On many occasions, the year 1951 is hoisted as a watershed in Nepali history. It is the year of the death of Rana autocracy and the birth of democracy. This was a significant political change, but to what extent did it precipitate and sustain social and economic changes?

The advent of democracy in Nepal did lead to some significant changes. The Interim Government Act of 1951 was enacted, which paved the way, at least in principle, for democracy, while also transferring subjects to citizens. Along with freedom of expression and political association, previous curtailments on education, travel and other personal liberties were lifted. Nepal also opened up to greater interactions not only with her more accessible Indian neighbor, but with the world beyond. The result of this opening

up was an increase in mobility among people and hence to a greater awareness of the world outside Nepal's border, followed by some social reforms as well.<sup>4</sup>

These were significant reforms for a society accustomed to the will of a hereditary prime minister and hence were a break with tradition on certain levels. However, the aim is not to compare these changes with those of the watershed period in Europe. The transitions in Europe gave rise to rapidly industrializing societies and nations. On the basis of industrialization grew the conglomerates of capitalism which quickly wiped out traditional socioeconomic patterns, feudalism to be particular. Under such circumstances, concepts were both a registration of and a direction towards this acceleration.

In the 1950s, Nepal was not a rapidly industrializing society, nor were traditional socioeconomic patterns greatly disturbed by the political transition. How then does one reconcile the thesis of the *Sattelzeit*, applicable primarily to industrial societies, to a nation that has never been industrialized?

This study does not equate the transition of 1951 with the *Sattelzeit*. Rather, Nepal's transitions are connected with politicization or a growing sense of political rights and responsibilities as citizens (*rājnitik sacetanā*). In Nepal, an accelerated sense of time, a rush towards modernity, was experienced initially and almost concomitantly with political changes of 1951. I say almost, since this gaze towards the future was not solely a modern preoccupation but the concern of the more traditional Rana rulers and their subjects as well. However, what set the democrats of post-1951 Nepal apart from the Ranas was a sense of urgency to define and map the future. This urgency was a result of the transformation of Nepali masses from being mere subjects to citizens. When passive subjects become politicized, assertive citizens, those in power feel the pressure of accountability. It was this politicization of Nepali citizens as they became increasingly aware and articulate that concepts such as *bikās* were minted.<sup>5</sup> Simultaneously, it was with this politicization that political vocabulary became a part of a wider pool of citizens when compared with the Rana era.

The second period of transition, which began in 1996 and is continuing, is a wider ramification of the first phase of politicization begun in 1951. The decade-long war (1996–2006) was fought on the basis of long-held grievances of citizens on the periphery. Nepal is a multi-ethnic country in which incorporating linguistic, religious and regional aspirations of each of its ethnic minority has been an uphill task and one on whose weakness the Maoist 'People's War' was fought. While in the early 1950s, a smaller number of educated, politicized Bahun, Chhetri and Newar elites were the main force behind political transformations, the second transition has witnessed wider participation. What the first phase of transformation set in motion was the spread of literacy which, among other things, resulted in a greater political awareness among Nepal's diverse ethnic groups. However, the rising aspirations were unable to find space within the political space that opened up after 1951 and with successive regime changes in 1960 and 1990. Hence, Nepal is witnessing a second and ongoing transformation that claims to be not only political or economic but social as well.

In Nepal, a bifurcation between the traditional and the modern is visible in politics and governance to the extent that it is possible to point to a date that represents the political beginnings of modernity. However, when one begins looking for structural changes, for tectonic shifts in social and economic

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<sup>4</sup> Travel to foreign lands was not an unknown phenomenon in late nineteenth century Nepal. Such voyages were either made by Gurkha recruits of the British regiments or by individuals and families seeking escape from Rana censure, the latter finding solace in north Indian cities. See Hutt 2012: 101–144.

<sup>5</sup> Democracy, state, nationalism, citizen were other basic concepts that were as prevalent as development in the 1950s.



settings, one notices struggles that are recent and ongoing. Therefore, this study refers to Nepal as passing through ongoing transitions with the 1950s movement against the Ranas, the 1990 movement for the restoration of democracy and the decade-long ‘People’s War’ being landmarks in this ongoing transition.

### 1.5 *Bikās* as a concept

At the core of this study is the argument that *bikās* is not only a word but also a concept. *Bikās* is not simply the Nepali translation for development, neither is it a synonym of other Nepali words *unnati* and *pragati*. *Bikās*, an amalgam of practices, policies, ideals and ideologies, is a ‘concentrate of meanings’ (Koselleck 2004: 84). What, then, are concepts and how are they different from words?

Concepts are associated with words but not every word is a social or political concept. Whereas words are associated with definite sets of meanings, concepts are not. Concepts are elastic, fluid, open ended and mean many things to many people. According to Reinhart Koselleck, ‘in use a word can become unambiguous. By contrast, a word must remain ambiguous in order to be a concept...a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word’ (ibid). Koselleck also emphasizes that *Begriffsgeschichte*, or the history of concepts, is concerned only with *basic concepts*, those concepts that have historical and sociopolitical resonance, and is not to be confused with technical or analytical ones.

In accordance with the above description, *bikās* is a basic concept that has condensed meanings from varied social and political milieu in Nepali history. The fact that it lacks a precise definition and is able to mean many things to many people makes it ambiguous. *Bikās*, as a concept, is an amalgam of many ideas and experiences and is able to speak to a heterogeneous audience. On the other hand, *bikās* has had to share space with *unnati*, *pragati* and sometimes *sabhyatā* (civilization). These, in Koselleckian terms, are called parallel expressions; they are those competing words and concepts that are used in parallel with *bikās*. *Unnati*, *pragati* and *sabhyatā* form important components here since a study aimed at conceptual history of *bikās* necessarily takes into consideration not only contemporary words or concepts but also those that existed in preceding generations. In spite of the appearance of the English notion of ‘industrial development’ in Rana era correspondence by the 1940s, its Nepali translation *bikās* was a rarity. Equating *bikās* with development is a recent phenomenon. Rather, Nepali words *unnati*, *pragati* and *sabhyatā* were used frequently to explain early attempts at progress. Therefore, in exploring the history of the concept of *bikās*, the study necessarily looks into parallel concepts such as *pragati* and *unnati*, and a diachronic study of these will help reveal how *bikās* established itself as the dominant concept among these competing concepts.

This study argues that *bikās* is a future-oriented concept and therefore regenerative. By this it is meant that since *bikās* speaks of the future, as do most concepts, and since the future is always open ended, *bikās* becomes regenerative. This is why *bikās* has continued to hold sway whether it is the fifties, the Panchayat, the nineties or the Maoist war years. This ability of semantic renewal makes *bikās* relevant in Nepal’s political language. Additionally, the semantic expansion of *bikās* has pushed the boundaries of political language away from the elite, ruling class and into public imaginations and vocabulary and, in the process, challenged the status quo. As such, the sociopolitical concept of *bikās* contributes to the deepening of democracy in Nepal.

### 1.6 The method of *Begriffsgeschichte*

The method of *Begriffsgeschichte* which sets it apart from similar fields of critical history such as the history of political thought is its ability to merge synchronic with diachronic analysis. Synchronic

analysis of the concept in question provides an understanding of language as it is at a particular point in time. Combining this with a diachronic analysis illuminates structural transformations. According to Koselleck, the focus of synchrony is on the ‘contemporary space of experience’. In other words, synchronic analysis focuses on a particular period with its contextual social and political structures and how these affect and influence concepts. Synchronic analysis focuses on the interrelation between concepts and sociopolitical structures at a particular juncture. Diachronic analysis removes concepts from ‘their situational context’ and orders them ‘according to the sequence of time’ and then ‘with respect to each other’ (Koselleck 2004: 82). Diachronic analysis looks at concepts over a period of time and examines transformation that they undergo. As Melvin Richter writes, ‘what these concepts were, how they were contested, and the extent to which they remained constant, were altered, or created de novo are the integrating themes of the GG project’ (Richter 1997: 27). Elaborating the importance of diachronic analysis, Richter writes that it contributes to establishing ‘exactly which one among the competing conceptual usages is being used in a text’ (Richter 1995: 129).

Following this is another methodological aspect of conceptual history, namely the need to investigate onomasiology along with semasiology, both branches of linguistics. Semasiology refers to the study of all the meanings of a term, whereas onomasiology refers to different words that are used to refer to the same thing. To give one example, a semasiology of the word ‘government’ refers to the various meanings associated with it, while the onomasiology of the word ‘government’ can be other words such as regime, directorate and authority. A study of the history of a concept of ‘government’ will need to take into consideration all of its varied manifestations both semasiologically and onomasiologically. Koselleck emphasizes that this is essential in order to trace the temporal dimensions of concepts through methodical assessment of how parallel or opposite expressions interact with and enrich the concept in question. This methodological step ensures that the array of social and political experiences condensed into concepts is not overlooked by the exclusivity of semasiology.

A study of such a magnitude that looks not only as far back as possible but also as close to the present as it requires sources that are broad ranging. Melvin Richter classifies the sources used in *Begriffsgeschichte* into three broad types. The first are those from systematic theorists, the second from political, social and legal materials and the third type of sources are dictionaries, encyclopedias, professional and vocational handbooks and thesauri (ibid: 18).

A broad-ranging attempt such as this is bound to have its strengths and drawbacks. A study that is exclusively occupied with the writings of eminent political theorists, or eminent political actors as in the case of Nepal, will shed invaluable light on the nature of sociopolitical language, since these eminent actors are powerful agents that shape and influence language. However, such exclusivity can fail to pay attention to everyday usages. *Begriffsgeschichte* attempts to overcome this by making use of the second and third types of sources, among which fall newspapers, journals, pamphlets, reports, administrative and legal documents as well as the more neutral sources such as dictionaries, both bilingual and multilingual (ibid: 50–51).

This study focuses extensively on written data, with interviews supplementing it as and when required. The reason for this exclusive attention to written data is due to the nature of *Begriffsgeschichte* which emphasizes synchronic and diachronic analysis. Synchronic studies limited to a certain point in time are more suitable to the interplay of various forms of data. Diachronic studies, in the case of Nepal, suffer from a paucity of resources and rely mostly on written data. During the first half of the twentieth century, record keeping was done by educated Newar or Brahmin elite. Hence, most of what survives in archives and in private libraries, of which very few exist, are written documents. For post-1950 Nepal, although the possibility of relying extensively on non-written data is not absent, this study restrict itself to written sources because conceptual history, as the study of basic concepts articulated through the

medium of language, is best expressed in written form. Additionally, this study is the first of such a conceptual history in Nepal. As such, written data provides the groundwork for later studies that can combine written sources with other forms of data.

Most of the sources for chapters two, three and four are from archival research conducted mostly at the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya in Kathmandu, the Nepal National Library at Harihar Bhavan in Kathmandu and the National Archives of India in New Delhi. Microfilms of newspapers *Śāradā* and *Āvāj* as well as microfilms of the magazine *Vikās* were studied at the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya. The Pustakalaya is also the repository of *Gorkhāpatra*, the newspaper counted as among the oldest vernacular in Nepal, which was consulted to substantiate the second chapter, as well as dictionaries preserved from the Rana and post-Rana 1950s. Among the rich assortment of books preserved at the Nepal National Library, this study uses books and booklets published by the Pancāyat Pracār Prasār Vibhāg of the Panchayat regime. Collections at the National Archives of India pertaining to Nepal from 1900 to 1950 fall under the foreign and political sections for the periods 1900 to 1946 and under the foreign affairs section from 1947 onwards. These contain documents pertaining to the correspondence between the Rana prime ministers and the British ministers in India as well as reports on Nepal and those on the activities of Nepali subjects residing in northern India. In addition to these archival sources and library collections, this study also relies on out-of-print and inaccessible books written between the waning days of the Rana rule and the late 1950s and 1960s which have attentively been preserved in private collections.

The fifth and sixth chapters deal with fairly recent historical contents, and hence the sources for these chapters are mostly books published from 1990 to 2013, accompanied by occasional interviews. Digital archives such as the Digital Himalaya and the website of the National Planning Commission have also contributed to source collection and in writing the chapters on the 1990s and the Maoist war years.<sup>6</sup>

There have been questions about the methods of *Begriffsgeschichte* (Sheehan 1978, Coleman 1999, Richter 2005). The following section will bring to the fore some of the common methodological and theoretical queries spelled out in the above papers, while the concluding chapter will discuss how this study engaged with these queries. Sheehan (1978) argues that not all the contributors to the *GG* are successful in their treatment of a concept as a unit of analysis. Most flounder and are unable to trace a concept's diachronic evolution because the concept they choose overlap with other concepts and so are difficult to treat as single, circumscribed and whole. He proposes that the difficulty could be solved by assembling 'closely related concepts into a single article' and 'broadening the focus of inquiry' (ibid: 315). Secondly, he argues that some of the contributing articles in the *GG* also falter in tracing the meaning of concepts over time. While Koselleck claims that concepts have multiple meanings and cannot be narrowed down to the most 'representative' meaning based on selected, prominent sources, Sheehan criticizes the contributors of the *GG* for failing to keep this in mind, for their lack of attention to semantic variety emerging from the 'literate public' following the spread of print capitalism (ibid: 316). In order to counter the problem of meanings, Sheehan suggests that *Begriffsgeschichte* 'cover a narrow chronological period or focus on a set of specific historical documents' in order to better grasp the relation between language and structural transformation (ibid: 317). Finally, Sheehan argues that the *GG* also flounders in showing the relation between concepts and context since most contributors discuss concepts out of their political context and are hence hardly successful in revealing diachrony.

Coleman questions how *Begriffsgeschichte* proposes to integrate concepts and their parallels into a 'narrative which adequately reconstructs an integrated political and social vocabulary...?' (Coleman

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<sup>6</sup> See annex for a list of exact sources used.

1999: 39). Coleman also questions the criteria of source selection, arguing that sources survive selectively, that sources are ‘retrospective nominations by later generations’ (ibid) and as such presents a problem for establishing synchrony of concepts. Additionally, she inquires, ‘what criteria do we use to privilege social and political concepts and how do we recognize such concepts, distinguishing them from other concepts in the pre-modern world?’ (Coleman 1999: 38). This is a significant question. For this study, the ‘pre-modern’ words *pragati* and *unnati* have been identified as precursors to *bikās*. While *bikās* is a basic concept, how does one determine that words *pragati* and *unnati* are basic ‘pre-modern’ concepts as well?

This study attempts to understand how, among a number of competing and dominant words such as *pragati*, *unnati* and *sabhyatā*, *bikās* rose to be the hegemonic concept post democracy. Unlike Coleman’s questions about the criteria to be used in identifying pre-modern concepts, this study does not begin with the proposition that *bikās* was a pre-modern concept. Neither does it propose that *pragati* and *unnati* were pre-modern concepts. This study is concerned with understanding the historical processes by which the transition from a certain set of words to a basic concept occurred.

On Coleman’s question of identifying pre-modern concepts, it would be safe to follow Koselleck’s definition of a basic concept and study its transition from a word with clear, unambiguous definitions to an ambiguous assortment of many meanings before the *Sattelzeit*. In the case of *bikās*, for example, its definition was originally confined to its Sanskrit roots referring to biological growth. *Bikās* had moved away from its original Sanskrit meaning by the late 1950s and had begun to appear with more frequency alongside *unnati* and was used to mean not growth exclusively but as a parallel to *unnati*. Hence, although *bikās* is a very modern concept, it did not switch suddenly from pre-modern to modern definitions.

Another important methodological concern is raised by Richter (2005). He raises the issue of translation and reception of concepts from one to another completely different culture and, in this paper particularly, on the reception of concepts from the English-speaking world into the Chinese language. Richter proposes that an accurate translation is never possible since the recipient society is vastly different historically, culturally, religiously, politically, institutionally and linguistically. Rather, the possible outcome is ‘partial understanding combined with some misunderstanding of what is being translated in a more or less creative adaptation to the new context’ (Richter 2005: 10). *Begriffsgeschichte*, however, does not address this concern since it was limited to analyzing German concepts, and not to cross-cultural concepts.

### 1.7 An alternative study of concepts

This section briefly discusses the work of Quentin Skinner. Skinner, like Koselleck, engages in concepts as units of analysis. Both Skinner and Koselleck agree that concepts are fluid. Skinner even accepts that his attempt to unravel conceptual changes began by questioning the claims of Arthur Lovejoy, the historian of ideas, who argued that ideological debates contain certain ‘unit ideas’ which are permanent and unchanging at their core (Skinner 1999).<sup>7</sup> However, Skinner and Koselleck differ in their approach to answering what changes when a concept changes. This question is posed and answered by Kari Palonen, who in comparing and connecting Skinner and Koselleck’s approach to conceptual change writes, ‘my thesis is that Skinner advocates a linguistic, more specifically: a rhetorical, view on

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<sup>7</sup> The history of ideas was a discipline popularized by historian Arthur O. Lovejoy in the 1930s and has strong Anglophone roots. For details on the differences between conceptual history and the history of ideas, see Lehmann and Richter (1996), particularly the papers by Pocock (1996) and Koselleck (1997).

conceptual change, while Koselleck approaches the problem in terms of a “theory of historical times”’. Palonen claims that Koselleck’s idea of conceptual change refers to a change from space-oriented or topological concepts to temporal concepts resulting from the *Sattelzeit*, whereas Skinner is less concerned with such long-term conceptual changes but focuses on ‘the changing rhetoric of concept’ (Palonen 1999: 43). In reply, Skinner corroborates Palonen’s interpretations, adding that ‘the transformations we can hope to chart will not strictly speaking be changes in concepts at all. They will be changes in the use of the term by which our concepts are expressed...I have chiefly focused on what he (Palonen) describes as a rhetorical perspective...in the kinds of debate that take place when we ask whether a given action or state of affairs does or does not license us to apply some particular evaluative terms as apt descriptions of it’ (Skinner 1999: 63–64).

## 1.8 Structure of the thesis

To reiterate, this study seeks to understand *bikās* as a concept through a historical inquiry that begins with the late Rana period and concludes with the entry of the warring Maoists into mainstream politics. Such a wide-ranging attempt is so because concepts can only be understood through the long-term gaze of diachronic studies coupled with synchronic analysis that pause at particular historical junctures.

The chapters that follow are arranged in chronological order. The next chapter, chapter two, will focus on pre-*bikās* notions such as *unnati* and *sabhyatā*. It discusses how, why and through what channels *unnati*, Nepali for progress, was appropriated and reproduced by Rana rulers and their subjects. Since the parallel notion of *sabhyatā*, civilization, was as predominant as progress, this chapter will explore how the early notions of civilization that impinged on growing awareness of the divide between Nepal and the world outside its border led to the adoption of concepts of *unnati* as well as of the English word development.

Chapter three will focus on the interim years from 1951 to 1960, a period when the newly won democracy was augmented by the possibilities of ‘development’. The arrival of democracy not only ushered a new political setup but gave rise to hopes for social transformations and the advent of a new word, *bikās*, as the summation of these hopes. *Bikās* came to be used with greater frequency in spite of the availability of words such as *unnati* and *sabhyatā*. What was *bikās* and how was it different from *unnati* or *sabhyatā*? In exploring these questions, this chapter will look at the political rhetoric of the 1950s in order to understand the rise of the word *bikās* and what it signified for the 1950s.

Chapter four charts the journey of *bikās* through the three decades of Panchayat. That King Mahendra, the custodian of the Panchayat system, refurbished this political system into what he called a homegrown ‘guided democracy’ is commonly accepted. Whether or not he and his successor attempted the same with development is not clear. In other words, did the Panchayat system attempt to create a *bikās* that was native? In exploring this question, the chapter encounters a native alternative to the popular meanings of development. The chapter will answer what this attempt at a native *bikās* signified for the party-less Panchayat period.

Chapter five will focus on the 1990s. The movement for the restoration of democracy was marked by political plurality as well as the bustle of structural adjustment and the rise of a plethora of I/NGOs. This chapter will explore how the three prominent agents of the nineties – the state, the political parties and the I/NGO’s – took cognizance of rising political consciousness and how they influenced the metamorphosis of *bikās* into a concept. It will also explore the changing socio-structural landscape of the nineties, the extent to which it facilitated the transformation of *bikās* from a word to a concept and the limitations of such a transformation.

Chapter six studies the concept of *bikās* during the decade-long Maoist war. The chapter will discuss what was unique about the Nepali Maoists' interpretations of development that was not a part of the wider Nepali Marxist debates or the general debates on *bikās*. It will examine whether or not Maoist interpretations succeeded in establishing itself as a prominent facet of the concept and what this means for a society transitioning towards one with more liberal goals. The concluding chapter summarizes the main findings while also discussing the theoretical and methodological challenges of conceptual history.

## **1.9 Limitations**

This study is based mostly on written sources. As with many historical sources, the ones that have been used in this study are the ones that survived the onslaught of time because they were considered important to be preserved for posterity. This act of preservation is selective. It reflects the priorities of a bygone era. Acts of selective preservation prevent diverse histories from coming to focus, especially in a country like Nepal which was, at least until the 1960s, minimally literate.

This study does not claim to be an all-encompassing, comprehensive history of the concept of *bikās* but is the first step in the direction of a conceptual history that is representative of the diverse social and political histories across Nepal. As such, it is an attempt to unravel the ambiguity surrounding *bikās* by focusing only on written Nepali and English sources within literate and semi-literate Nepal to the exclusion of popular oral and visual sources. This focus on written history does not prevent the study from occasionally including personal recollections of surviving ideologues of post-Rana modern Nepal. However, it does so only to substantiate written sources as and when required.

## CHAPTER II: NEPAL'S PRE-BIKĀS ENCOUNTERS WITH THE WEST: *SABHYATĀ* AND *UNNATI* AS PRECURSORS TO *BIKĀS* IN THE RANA ERA<sup>8</sup>

This chapter explores the precursors to the concept of development. Conventionally, it is believed that the dawn of 'modern', democratic Nepal and the dawn of foreign-aided development coincide. This chapter looks beyond conventional explanations. It focuses on Nepali words *sabhyatā* (civilization) and *unnati* (progress).<sup>9</sup> These precursors were part of an emerging discourse that compared the people of Nepal with the outside world following the country's early encounter with the West even before the era of foreign-aided development. While *sabhyatā* and *unnati* antecede *bikās*, they were not the equivalent of *bikās*. They are what Koselleck (2004) calls 'parallels' that abut and, in this case, precede the protagonist concept.

The chapter begins by discussing the Rana Prime Minister Jang Bahadur's journey to England and France. This was the first purposeful, non-military encounter with the West and was to influence the kingdom's perceptions of itself and the world outside its border and is the earliest example of positive identification with the British Empire. Positive identifications were also pronounced during the reign of prime ministers Chandra Shamsher and Juddha Shamsher as is visible in Chandra's slavery abolition speech and Juddha's 'industrial development', which are discussed subsequently. By the time Juddha was contemplating Nepal's industrialization, his rationale for positive identification were worded through *unnati* (progress) and *sabhyatā* and through the English word development, the latter, however, remaining confined to Juddha Shamsher's communications. Hence, the chapter teases out the range of meanings associated with the two Nepali words *unnati* and *sabhyatā* by surveying the magazine *Śārādā*. It then discusses the subordination of the word 'development' to the more popular *unnati* during the late Rana era. It concludes with a brief comparison between the genesis of the ideas of progress and development in the West and in Nepal.

### 2.1 Encounter with the West – Jang Bahadur's voyage

In his book *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*, Winichakul (1994[1988]) speaks of 'negative identification', which he describes as the tendency of an ethnic group to define themselves in terms of the differences that set them apart from other ethnic groups and people. He discusses this in reference to the tendency of the Thai people to define Thainess by placing themselves in opposition to what they consider to be un-Thai. Such 'negative identification' is not restricted to Thailand but is ubiquitous, he claims. But what about the opposite of 'negative identification', the attempts by groups and nationalities to identify themselves according to the qualities they consider worthy of emulating from a different ethnicity or nation? For the sake of convenience, let us call this positive identification. Although Winichakul can hardly be unaware of this equally common tendency, perhaps he chooses not to dwell on it since the Thai case in the late 1890s was attempted at a hybrid between traditional Buddhism and Western science that tried to incorporate as much of Western science as it tried to retain its Buddhist traditions.

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<sup>8</sup> A slightly revised version of this chapter is published in *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 22(2).

<sup>9</sup> Apart from *unnati* and *sabhyatā*, the other word that parallels *bikās* is *pragati*, also translated as progress. In the sources examined here, the resounding absence of *pragati* is only occasionally broken when it stands alongside the then popular *unnati* as a synonym. It is only with the emergence of the anti-Rana dissidents from their underground movement into a consolidated Nepal Praja Parishad that *pragati* begins to diverge from *unnati* and to carve a separate left-aligned existence. This, however, occurs after the fall of the Rana regime and is discussed in the next chapter.

Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana's journey to England and France in 1850 resulted in Nepal's earliest case of 'positive identification'.<sup>10</sup> He was the first public figure to undertake such a journey primarily to gauge the strength of the *Āṅgrej bādsāh* (English emperor) and to purposefully observe Western customs, conduct and arrangements (*riti-thiti* and *bandobasta*) and to determine the kingdom's future policy towards this towering neighbor. This tour was a watershed in Nepal's internal and external policies which, till then, was confined to court rivalries, warfare and territorial acquisition. However, this voyage was not the first encounter. It was preceded by the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814–1816. The *Gurkhali*<sup>11</sup> zeal for territorial expansion terminated with its defeat in 1815 at the hands of the East India Company, its military prowess unable to withstand the sophistication of British warfare. Although Jang Bahadur Rana became prime minister three decades after the war, it was this collision with the British Empire that was to nurture his desire for firsthand assessment of British might. No rajah, nawab or *bādsāh* from Hindustan had ever ventured into this land and newspapers were the only source that could provide an estimation of their strength. It was this gap that Jang Bahadur wished to overcome.<sup>12</sup>

A book titled *Jaṃga Bahādurkō Belāyat Yātrā* (Jang Bahadur's Journey to England) describes this journey and is supposedly the first travelogue written in the Nepali language circa 1854.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, however, the author of the book has never been identified, nor the original manuscript. Speculations regarding the authorship have narrowed down to three individuals accompanying Jang Bahadur's entourage, and the surviving copy itself is considered to be something hand copied from the original.<sup>14</sup> In spite of these more than significant omissions, historians agree that the surviving copy is indeed from the untraceable manuscript.

Being the first written account of the Gurkha kingdom's encounter with a culture and a political system different from its own, this travelogue captures the Gurkhali's initial impressions of the West, impressions that were to herald the search for *unnati*, *pragati* and *bikās* in later years. In England, Jang Bahadur and his entourage were to marvel at the big city and the amenities it offered. They were awestruck by the efficiency and the physical un-burdening of human life made possible by the ability of the *Āṅgrej* (the people of the West) to 'enslave' nature: fire, water and wind. The travelogue describes

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<sup>10</sup> Jang Bahadur Kunwar Rana became prime minister (1846–1877) following the Kot Massacre of 1846, in which his rivals the Pandeys and the Basnets were massacred. He was not only responsible for reducing the monarch to a figurehead and for making the post of prime minister hereditary but also for elevating the social status of his family by marriage alliance with the royal family. Then onwards the Kunwars were called the Ranas, the higher sub-caste Kshatriya of Rajaputana, in keeping with their newfound aristocracy.

<sup>11</sup> The word Gurkha was replaced by the word Nepal only during the reign of Chandra Shamsheer in the mid-1920s to describe the people and the territory of the entire kingdom.

<sup>12</sup> The first encounter between the Gurkhali kingdom and the Western world began with the arrival of the Capuchin mission in eighteenth-century Malla-era Kathmandu. The impact of these missionaries upon the Gurkhali kingdom has not been explored in detail so far. Most literature concludes that there was little exchange that was of significance. The missionaries were forced to retreat from the kingdom once Prithvi Narayan Shah ascended to power since the Shah king viewed them with suspicion. A second encounter that preceded the rise of Jang Bahadur Rana was Mukhtiyār (equivalent to prime minister) Bhimsen Thapa's flirtations with the French to form an alliance to oust the British from the subcontinent along with a similar alliance with Ranjit Singh of Punjab in the 1830s. Both of these were unsuccessful and contributed to Thapa's downfall. What is important to note is that these were military encounters and not 'pre-development' encounters, the subject of this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> The manuscript that survives at the Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya does not bear a title. This title *Jaṃga Bahādurkō Belāyat Yātrā* was given by the publisher.

<sup>14</sup> Details such as the possible authors, the language used, approximate date of the manuscript based on its physical appearance and information about a second surviving 'copy' are discussed in the preceding and succeeding sections of Jagadamba Prakashan's *Jaṃga Bahādurkō Belāyat Yātrā* (1965).



the delightful wonder of the *Gurkhali* in witnessing the compression of time and distance by the railway, the freedom from drudgery that accompanied the use of coal and steam power, the marvel of pipes and taps that carried rivers to the room, and the warm glow of the *gyāms batti* (gas light) that made the *candra-jyoti* (moon light) pale in comparison.

Along with descriptions of England's military strength, this travelogue devotes significant number of pages in describing British parliamentary procedures in the following words,

There is no space for comicality in the *sabhā* (congregation). One speaks and is replied to by another. If the debate on this subject is over everyone says yes and signs. If the debate is not over (*phālāphāl garī muddā ṭhaharāi*) a lot of books are looked at and answers given. The parment (sic) does not tolerate anybody's misbehavior (*berit*). It can take revenge on the *bādsāh*. It can dismiss the prime minister who has misbehaved. It can take revenge on the commander-in-chief who has misbehaved (and) there is no account of the lords, dukes, generals. If the army causes disturbance, another army is used to bomb it. (ibid: 29)

That nobody, not even the king or the prime minister, could be above the law was something this writer mentions on more than one occasion. This was in sharp opposition to the Gurkhali case where the Rana Prime Minister Jang Bahadur and the Shah kings were never under the ambit of the law. That the party was plentifully impressed by the *Āngrej* is evident in the many pages. What is also striking is that this retrospectively written travelogue was keen to impress upon its readers that Jang Bahadur was no less than the British rulers. Impressions of Jang Bahadur that were 'overheard' at banquets and receptions such as 'The *wazir* [minister] of Nepal is wise, in appearance and [in his] attire and jewelry [they] suit him, [he is] young and good looking' (ibid: 34) or elsewhere '...he speaks carefully. The Lord has bestowed him with intelligence suitable to this age' (*bakhatko buddhi isvarle diyeko rahecha*, ibid: 40) reveal how the writer penned Jang Bahadur's image to match the *Āngrej* in terms of regality and intelligence. Bedecked in jewelry, Jang Bahadur was equally sagacious and no less than the *Āngrej* in his capabilities. The following is one more 'overheard' description of Jang Bahadur during his sojourn in France,

The prime minister sahib of Nepal is very *ummedār*, in the sense that he is handsome, rich, wise, brave and agile. Carefully admitting that he should be aware of all kinds of work (*kām-kārkhānā*), not afraid to spend money when required, (and) claiming that he is the one to give to others never to take from them. Observing his activities and having heard that what he speaks comes true, observing his speech, gait, laughter the *kacahari* declared that he has the qualities of our [French] *bādsāh* and he will be a great man'. (ibid: 60)

Thus, while the Gurkhali entourage was positively impressed by *Belāyat*, there was keenness to project the prime minister as an equal as well. The 'other', the *Āngrej* from *Belāyat* and France, definitely held a magnetic allure over the Gurkhali but rather than debasing themselves and feeling inferior or incompetent this encounter opened the gates for social appraisal that was otherwise far from the musings of the territory hungry warriors and rulers. That Jang Bahadur was a consummate warrior required little proof, but since he was also equal to the English in terms of the 'intelligence suitable to this age' that intelligence bid him to cultivate friendship with them and to borrow from their wisdom. This 'intelligence' to borrow is twice mentioned in the following ways, 'to resent them (the *Āngrej*) will not benefit anyone' (ibid: 20) and '...strong are those *bādsāh* that draw from the intelligence of the *Āngrej* these days' (ibid: 21).

Borrowing from their intelligence and identifying positively with the *Āngrej*, Jang Bahadur promulgated the *Muluki Ain* in 1854, the first comprehensive administrative and personal law discussing, among others, the abolition of mutilation, partial abolition of *sati* and limitation of capital punishment to specific categories (Shaha 2001). The objective of the Ain was to ensure uniform

punishment to subjects, high and low, according to the nature of their offenses. The Ain also created a national hierarchy that legitimized the position of the ruling group (Höfer 1979). Nevertheless, the code was the first effort at systematizing civil administration in Nepal and also the first tangible result of positive identification.

## **2.2 Chandra Shamsher's slavery abolition speech as an example of positive identification**

Chandra Shamsher Jang Bahadur Rana's regime (1901–1929) was marked by comparative amity among the otherwise feuding brothers. Chandra Shamsher ruled with an iron fist and introduced reforms that were only possible because of his unchallenged stature. However, his reforms were partly a continuation of what was initiated by his predecessor Dev Shamsher (March 5–June 27, 1901). This section focuses on Chandra Shamsher, since his predecessor Dev Shamsher only ruled for one hundred and fourteen days compared to the twenty-eight years of Chandra's regime. The longer duration of his regime meant that Chandra Shamsher was able to enforce reforms both new and old. Although Dev Shamsher initiated reforms, it was Chandra Shamsher's regime, and not Dev's, that had a stronger social impact.

Chandra Shamsher provided continuity to Jang Bahadur's policies of friendship with the British Empire. During his reign, Nepal assisted Britain in the great war of 1914–1918 by supplying men and materials. For such assistance, Nepal was 'gifted' an annual present of one million rupees in perpetuity. Apart from his military tactics, Chandra Shamsher is also remembered for certain novel endeavors. He was the first ruler to send six students to Japan for technical trainings in 1902. During his regime, a hydroelectric station was installed at Pharping in 1911, Tri-Chandra College was set up in 1918, the railway from Raxaul to Amlekhgunj was constructed in 1927 and a cable way for transporting goods from Dhursingh to Matatirtha was completed in 1924. He also allowed for the publication of the first Nepali-to-English dictionary and introduced changes in the legal code. However, it has often been repeated in writings about the Ranas that the motive was primarily luxury driven with the consumption of luxury goods, creating a divide between the Ranas and their subjects (Regmi 1971; Liechty 2003). For instance, the Dhursingh-Matatirtha cable way was meant for ferrying building materials for palatial buildings and the Pharping power plant was constructed to light up these palaces. Although there was some productive use of technology, such as the ropeway being used to transport cheap rice from the lowlands to feed the laborers, these were merely 'afterthoughts' and technology was primarily meant to entertain those at the helm of the hierarchical order rather than being used for productive increase (Gyawali and Dixit 2010: 248).

What is not mentioned is that apart from trying to satiate their needs for luxury, this flirtation with technology and social change was a result of Nepal's positive identifications with the *Āngrej* across the border. In the case of Chandra Shamsher, this positive identification was associated with a new element – Nepal's sovereignty. Chandra Shamsher strove for a balance between emulating the British ways and ensuring Nepal's independence vis-à-vis British India. His flirtations with technology and social change were partly a result of the awareness of Nepal's precarious independence and therefore the need to appear distinct without greatly antagonizing the British in India.<sup>15</sup> He attempted to stand apart not by being the polar opposite of the West. Rather, this distinction was crafted by selectively borrowing from the ideas and institutions of the West, without letting it radically destabilize Nepali society as well as the friendship with the British. This is evident in Chandra Shamsher's stance on slavery.

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<sup>15</sup> Question as to whether Nepal is under the suzerainty of the British Crown. Foreign Department notes. Secret-E, March 1903. No. 228 in File no. 973, Legislative Department, National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi.

Slavery was abolished in Nepal in 1925. Amidst a large gathering of people in Tudhikhel, the grounds used then and now mainly for military parades, Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher delivered a speech sixty-one pages in length detailing its moral and financial burdens.<sup>16</sup> Although slavery was entrenched within certain parts of the kingdom, it was not ubiquitous. Nevertheless, it was a part of the historical fabric and had social functions which Chandra Shamsher was well aware of. Any attempt to uproot slavery violently could prove destabilizing.

The speech is an appeal from the prime minister to his people asking their views on the *amlekh* (manumission) of the *kariyā* (slave). It is not a speech declaring the abolition of slavery. Rather, it is an invitation to change that is mainly based on the everyday realities of early twentieth-century Nepal. It makes references to the immorality of slavery and provides compelling calculations to prove its cost ineffectiveness. It speaks to the upper echelons of society who were slave owners and guardians of social order based on Hindu codes as well as the ones preferring status quo. However, the speech does not rely heavily on religious interpretations. There are references to Hinduism, mostly towards the concluding sections. Sanskrit *sloks* are added to bolster the case along with a reminder about the merit that will be gained if slaves are freed from generations of servitude. Nevertheless, these do not form the core argument. Rather, the core arguments are based on the ‘census’, on mathematical calculations and on calls for rational judgment.

The speech begins by evoking the heroism of the Gurkhali, cautioning that it might be defamed if the *muluk* does not take actions to rid itself of the dark blot that is slavery. According to Chandra Shamsher, ‘although we should prevent the fame (of our forefathers) from being tainted, today in front of the *sabhya saṃsār* (civilized word) an ill-repute hounds that name and fame’ (*Kariyā Amlekh* n.d.: 2). He suggests that it may be appropriate to consider the abolishment of slavery in Nepal since it has ‘disappeared from all places in the world where *sabhyatā* resides’ (*Kariyā Amlekh* n.d.: 3). Although he briefly mentions how religious texts do not forbid the abolishment of slavery, he does not elaborate further. Instead, the discussion shifts towards the moral and financial burdens of slavery, interspersed with examples from the *sabhya saṃsār* along with pleas for empathy.

Citing examples from the Pemba island of Zanzibar and ‘Marishaya’ as well as ‘many new *Āṅgrej* settlements’, Chandra Shamsher states that slavery was discontinued in the *Āṅgrej* world because they realized its ills. He refers to the case of the slave settlements along the ‘Cat River’ occupied by the ‘Hatents’ to illustrate the difference in productivity among slaves before and after their emancipation. According to Chandra Shamsher,

When they (‘hatent’) were slaves, they were considered fools to the extent that even those in Africa, the *habsi*, would call them useless lazy make fun of them. When they became free (*āphu khusi bhayē pachi*) the same ‘hatent’ in the very same settlements became very hardworking and converted previously arid land into something like a beautiful garden with a variety of vegetation. It is bondage that prevents the slave from acquiring hardworking habits. This is why they have been made incapable of intelligence, wisdom and contemplation. (*Kariyā Amlekh* n.d.: 14).

The speech also cites a comparative ‘report’ that was commissioned by the government of Pemba and was investigated by certain *panca bhalādmī* (five good men). According to Chandra Shamsher, this ‘report’ calculated the costs and benefits in agricultural production between slaves and non-slaves in Pemba and Seychelles islands. This ‘report’ revealed that a free man who worked according to his will was thrice more efficient than a slave (ibid). Chandra Shamsher then makes a similar assessment of the

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<sup>16</sup> The speech ran up to 82 pages. The first 61 pages contained the actual speech and the remaining dealt with census and with calculations pertaining to the upkeep of slaves.

impact of slavery on Nepal's agriculture. Using mathematical calculations that were annexed to the main text, he argues that a hired worker, a *gyālādār*, is more efficient than a slave.

The speech is composed of two kinds of 'facts'. The first are everyday examples and social practices requiring the participation of a slave which the prime minister claimed would not be upset by the abolition. The second are evidence from the *sabhya muluk*, demonstrating the obsolescence of the practice. What also appears possible is that the speech was not only meant to be listened to but studied as well. This conjecture can be made because the speech was also printed in the form of a book with an 'annex' of calculations and census data.

It is only after describing these 'facts' in length that Chandra Shamsher gave voice to the source that prompted him towards this issue. He asks his audience to

Forget the fact that slavery is considered harsh by the world that has achieved *sabhyatā* (*sabhyatā pāyekā sārā saṁsār*), they even avoid extending ties of friendship with those that continue this practice, the *jāti* that practices this (slavery) is not considered *sabhya* by anyone.... Even if we only consider what the *sabhya saṁsār* will say, in this phase that is renowned as the *yuga* of *sabhyatā* that *sarkār* (ruler) marching towards *unnati* will immediately do what it has to do to preserve its dignity in the face of other *muluk*. (ibid: 45)

Further ahead he states, 'when our interactions with other *sabhya jāti* of the world are growing (and the influence (*naitik bal*, moral strength) of their good thoughts on us is rapidly increasing it has become necessary for us to work on this matter according to the need of the time' (ibid: 48). To simplify, this sentence refers to the moral strength provided by the 'good thoughts' of the civilized world which prompted Chandra Shamsher to act against slavery.

Hence, it is clear that his anti-slavery attempts arose from Nepal's interactions with the *sabhya* world. While the 'good thoughts' (*asal bicār*) of the *sabhya* world provided Chandra with strength to change an ill-begotten practice, he as prime minister had to ensure that the discontinuity of slavery would not affect social order. In order to convince his people, he cites examples of the abolition of *sati*, which he claims did not destabilize social order. Towards the end of the speech, Chandra Shamsher also seeks suggestions from his people, asserting that he will act according to their decision. There appears to have been little opposition to his appeal.

In explaining to his people that slavery was barbarous, Chandra Shamsher projected himself as an enlightened ruler who was aware of the *sabhya* practices such as anti-slavery movements. He relied on calculations and everyday examples which he had chosen carefully. His reference to far-flung Zanzibar proves that he was well aware of anti-slavery movements. Since this speech does not refer to the long struggle that accompanied the *sabhya* world's emancipation of slavery, it reveals how he selected only certain aspects of the anti-slavery movement, possibly because he feared a backlash from the dominant caste groups who could be emboldened to act against his proposal. Simultaneously, he unhesitatingly expressed his admiration of the *Angraj*. Such admiration was part of Chandra Shamsher's congenial policies towards British India. In spite of it, however, the need to be identified as a sovereign kingdom, distinct from the British-controlled Indian princely states, was also paramount. In deciding to abolish slavery, Chandra Shamsher outdid the most 'progressive' of Indian princely states. Selective borrowing from the *sabhya* world provided Chandra a certain amount of distinction that he sought as a sovereign, enlightened ruler of a kingdom that was different from the princely states of British-ruled India.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In writing about the abolishment of capital punishment in Nepal, the Tribune published from Lahore and dated August 1, 1931, mentions Nepal's earlier achievement – the abolition of slavery – in the following words: 'Nepal, which some time ago startled those who believed that it was impervious to modern thought or modern influences by abolishing slavery, has now

### 2.3 Positive identification under new circumstances – Juddha Shamsher's industrial pursuits

Nepal's early attempt at industrialization is another case of positive identification with the West, albeit with adjustments. The desire to industrialize Nepal was strongly evident during the reign of Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher. Unlike Chandra Shamsher, however, Juddha was not encumbered by the question of Nepal's sovereignty since, by the time he ascended to power, Nepal had significantly consolidated her independence and was beginning to extend her hand in friendship to previously unconnected countries. Along with strengthening traditional ties with British India, Juddha also received decorations and medals from France, Italy, Germany, Netherlands, Japan and Finland.<sup>18</sup> At a certain point during the Great War, Juddha Shamsher was also emboldened to court the friendship of Hitler and Mussolini, his son and envoy to England, Bahadur Shamsher, having met the two in Berlin and Rome respectively (Pande 1987, vol. II: 64).

This extension of foreign relations beyond India and Tibet was a bold move for a country tied to the 'good will' and constant monitoring of British India. It speaks of the success that Nepal had achieved in asserting her independence away from the cautious balancing strategies of Chandra Shamsher's regime. The impact of this was an emboldened prime minister whose self-image was not exclusively tied to the positive identification of earlier days. Like his predecessor, Juddha Shamsher believed that Nepal could learn from the West. However, the earlier belief that tied the longevity of the Rana regime to the benevolent support from British India was replaced by the realization that British India was equally dependent on the Ranas for peace and stability. Juddha's proposals for industrial 'development' were made under these new circumstances.

Between 1936 and 1950, a total of sixty-three industries were registered (Kandel 2009: 273). Not surprisingly, however, most of these were set up with joint investments from the Rana elite and the Indian Marwari community across the border. Some prominent industries of this period were the Biratnagar Jute Mill Ltd., Pashupati Sugar Works Ltd., Morang Sugar Mill Ltd., Juddha Match Factory, Nepal Chemical Industries, Shree Nepal Dhanwantari Niketan Ltd. (medicine manufacturing), Nepal Cooperative Medicinal Suppliers Ltd., Morang Hydroelectric Supply Company Ltd., Birgunj Cotton Mill, Morang Cotton Mill Ltd., Nepal Sabun Karyala Company Ltd. (soap factory), Nepal Plywood and Bobbin Company Ltd., Nepal Mica Company Ltd. and Shree Ragupati Jute Mill Ltd. along with some textile mills.

Similarly, a separate department for the promotion of cottage industries, the *Nepāl Kapaḍā ra Gharelu Ilam Pracār Aḍḍā* was also established. This was augmented by training centers around the Kathmandu valley as well as in Baglung, Palpa and Bandipur. The training schools in the latter three places dealt mainly with textile. Other types of cottage industries that were promoted were paper, earthenware, leather, wood, bamboo and herbal medicines.

Such industrial 'development' was accompanied by concrete policy measures such as exemption of custom duties on import and export of industrial goods through the Nepal Company Act of 1936. Enacted with the aim of encouraging savings and investment in industries, the Act opened the way for a significant number of industries along the Indo-Nepal border areas of the Tarai. Additionally, the

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taken a further step along the same line, which has placed it, in respect of vital matters, in the front rank of modern nations. The abolition of capital punishment which has just been announced by the Rana prime minister of Nepal is a momentous step in advance.' Foreign Department. Ext 238 – X, 1931, NAI.

<sup>18</sup> According to Pande, the Finnish Marshal Mannerheim visited Nepal on a hunting trip during the reign of Juddha Shamsher. The book also states that medals were exchanged with Finland and with Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and Japan during this period. However, it does not describe what these medals were (Pande 1987, vol. III: 174).

establishment of the Nepal Bank Limited, the Udyog Pariṣad, the Sundarijal hydropower plant built in 1934 and the presence of two railway lines connecting the Tarai to the Indian bordering towns – the Raxaul-Amlekhgunj railway built in 1927 and the Janakpur–Jayanagar railway built in 1940 – were strong incentives for industrialization. In spite of these efforts at promoting and protecting industries, Nepali goods were unable to compete in a market that was inundated with cheaper goods from British India. Up until the early 1900s, Nepali cottage industries had been thriving mainly due to the restriction on import of foreign goods. These restrictions were relaxed after the 1923 Anglo-Nepal Friendship Treaty during the reign of Chandra Shamsher, when the doors to import were opened wide. Although Juddha Shamsher's 'industrial and economic development' provided impetus to large industries and tried restoring smaller ones, the pace could not be sustained since Nepal lacked the necessary skills and capital to compete with Indian goods. Additionally, the end of the Second World War caused a slump in exports and eventually killed these nascent industries that had relied on the demands for cheap goods during the war. By the end of the 1950s, less than a handful of these budding industries survived. Nevertheless, the following was the rationale for 'economic development' as put forward by Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher to the British envoy. It states,

For some years past the Government of Nepal has been anxiously considering the decadent economic situation of the country. The combined effect of various causes, coupled with the dearth of occupation at home and keener competition outside, resulted in worsening of the condition of not only the lower ranks but through natural repercussion also those of middle and even the upper classes of society. This has made it imperative to seek and find ways and means to ameliorate, to some extent at least, the acuteness of the stress. It is hoped that discriminating industrial development on a moderate or small cottage scale, utilizing the local raw materials and cheap power units available in the country will bring some relief and that as capital, intelligence and labor in the country can be combined in such development such methods gradually introduced may prove of help to that end at this juncture.<sup>19</sup>

Juddha Shamsher believed that 'industrial development' would result in economic betterment and in the welfare (*bhalāi*) of the people. It was the duty of the prime minister of a sovereign nation to develop industries and hence to develop the economy. In his capacity as prime minister of an independent country, he negotiated for this 'industrial development' since he had come to understand that a symbiotic relation existed between the two countries in matters of security and political stability. The following two excerpts are from two separate letters written by Juddha Shamsher to Colonel Betham which exemplify the shift from positive identifications emanating from awe and admiration (circa 1850s–1910s) to one that was less adulatory and more assertive. In a letter dated September 1940, Juddha reminds the British minister of the assistance provided by Nepal during the First World War and argues thus,

On the strength of all these friendly services ungrudgingly rendered from time to time, Nepal may well feel that she has a right to count and rely upon the generous cooperation and help of the British Government in developing her limited resources towards making herself self-supporting as best as she could.

A second letter from Juddha to Betham dated March 1943, countering British anxieties that an industrialized Nepal could encroach Indian markets, reminds the British Minister of the assistance rendered by Nepal during the Younghusband Mission to Tibet. Juddha writes,

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<sup>19</sup> Letter from the Prime Minister of Nepal to H.M.'s Minister in Nepal, January 24, 1937, Question of the imposition of excise duty on sugar etc. imported from Nepal into British India. Question of concluding a trade agreement with India, in file number 616–X, 1937, External Affairs Department Notes, Serial nos. 1–16, NAI.

Had Nepal stuck to speak of her loss it will not be too much to say that the history of India of the time would have come to be written quite differently from what it is. Much depends upon the will to do.... If, as stated, the Government of India's International obligation in respect of Most-Favoured (sic) Nation- Treatment really stand on the way, there can perhaps be no earthly reason whatever at least to our being plainly told that the traditional usage of levying no tax or custom duty on goods and livestock of Nepal origin imported by land and or by water into India will be adhered to. These usages have never transgressed nor for the matter of that the continuance of the same be a transgression on international obligations. Moustache, says a Nepali proverb, can be no obstacle to a devouring mouth.<sup>20</sup>

Hence, by the time Juddha Shamsher consolidated his hold over the kingdom, the precarious positive identifications of an earlier period was not as encumbered by Nepal's relations with the more powerful British India as it was during Chandra Shamsher's regime. As will be discussed next, while Nepal acknowledged the strengths of Western *sabhyatā*, Juddha's industrial pursuit was the result of positive identification that was as keen to prove its own worth as it was open to emulating from the West. As one review of Juddha Shamsher's regime put it, 'In the march of progress Nepal is making an earnest effort to keep pace with the other nations of the world. The special characteristic of this progress lies in making changes without disturbing the national ideal and without any apish imitation of other nations. This is the inner spirit of the present regime' (*The Modern Review* September 1939: 282–283).

## 2.4 Towards industrialization – the vocabulary of *sabhyatā*, *unnati* and 'development'

Two significant events need to be mentioned in connection with Juddha's industrialization. The first was the industrial exhibition held in Kathmandu in 1937, which was followed by subsequent exhibitions in 1939 and 1944. The exhibitions were aimed at encouraging manufacturing and industries based on locally available raw materials. They also sought to promote local skills in handicraft and cottage industries as well as to increase the awareness and popularity for local goods. The organizer Bijay Shamsher's speech on the occasion of the first exhibition emphasizes the importance of self-reliance and local manufacturing but also dwells on such practices in *sabhya* countries. According to him,

Exhibitions are useful for the promotion of skills and commerce. Apart from exhibitions, there is no other place where industrious men and others gather and share their skills. It is an established practice in *sabhya* countries to hold exhibitions on various subjects in order to educate their subjects (*rāiti duniyā*) and to encourage them towards *udyog* for the *unnati* of the country. (General Bijay Shamsher's speech in *Gorkhāpatra* v.s. 1994, Baisakh 11)

Similar reference to *sabhya* countries is also found in the editorial of the *Gorkhāpatra* of the same date, according to which,

In the *sabhyatā* of today, the *sabhya* countries have been organizing many exhibitions regularly.... Any country may face conditions where it has to learn many things from foreign (countries) – this is also an enduring truth. Yes, but what should be done is – while learning foreign skills (one should not) color one's thought and soul in foreign color such that the pure name of one's ancestor is tainted. The rule is to learn foreign qualities and to mold them to fit the country.... Japan's navigation is no less than any other today, but the seeds were sown merely seventy years ago by the hard work of an English sailor who knows to what extent the seed of the developmental process of *unnati* may grow. (*unnatiko kram bikās katro biu bāṭa katro huna āūcha – ke ṭhegān*). (*Gorkhāpatra* v.s. 1994, Baisakh 11)

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<sup>20</sup> The two letters are contained in NAI, External Affairs, 788–X/40, secret, 1940.

Although *bikās* makes a sudden appearance here, it was not associated with development as ‘industrial development’ but with growth in the biological sense. The social and political connotations of *bikās* were not yet in practice.

While Juddha Shamsher’s speech on the occasion of the three exhibitions does not mention *sabhya des* or *sabhyatā* but reiterates the importance of self-reliance, the speech delivered by Bijay Shamsher on the occasion of the third exhibition is consistent in terms of the *sabhyatā* rationale. According to this speech,

Among the pertinent problems of the modern (*ādhunik*) world, economic problems are the most difficult. It is economic conditions through which the differences between countries become visible. Economic *unnati* is synonymous with *des unnati*. In other words, that country in which its people eat well, live in good houses, are educated and informed, where unemployment is low, where production and distribution are well regulated, that country is considered *sabhya* and powerful. Thus, the betterment of lifestyle is the main indicator of material *sabhyatā* (*bhautik sabhyatā*) .... Industry makes a country rich: the more wealth a country absorbs, the greater the economic awakening of its people.... A country where farmers are not involved in any business, there the farmers will remain in the lowest rung of the ladder of material *sabhyatā*. (*Gorkhāpatra* v.s. 2001, Jeth 3)

*Sabhya* countries provided inspiration for *udyog* and auxiliary activities such as the exhibitions. *Sabhya* countries were also increasingly associated with *unnati* of the economic and material kind, as is evident in the above excerpts. While attempting to emulate the material progress of the *sabhya des* was a worthy undertaking, Juddha Shamsher’s industrial ventures were not only attempting to emulate these countries and create employment opportunities within Nepal but also prevent Nepal’s wealth from draining into British India and beyond. At the inaugural speech of the second exhibition, Juddha Shamsher did not hesitate to state the following, ‘No matter how beautiful foreign goods are, there can be no pride among those who import such goods, sell them among kith and kin and accumulate wealth...it would be praise worthy if the needs of the country can be met through goods made in the country and if we are able to export’ (*Gorkhāpatra* v.s. 1996, Bhadra 30). Similarly, his speech at the Udyog Parishad emphasized the importance of self-reliance in the following words, ‘We should constantly strive to make ready within the country itself those goods we need. The ongoing war shows us the difficulties that can be encountered when basic goods have to be brought from outside’ (*Śāradā* 10: 1–2, v.s. 2001 Baisakh, Jestha). A similar message disseminated by the *Nepāl Kapaḍā ra Gharelu Ilam Pracār Aḍḍā* states, ‘Every year crores of rupees are drained out of Nepal...lakhs of rupees drain out only for cloths. If everyone starts using *sāri* and other clothes and goods made here...it would be possible to retain the money that otherwise drains outside’ (*Śāradā* 2: 5 v.s. 1996 Jestha).

Like his predecessor Chandra Shamsher, Juddha Shamsher was sensitive regarding Nepal’s reputation when compared with the *sabhya* world. However, while Chandra’s social reforms were cautious, Juddha’s were not gradual attempts by someone who was encumbered by a more powerful neighbor. Instead, in openly airing his desire for self-reliance through accelerated industrialization, a move unwelcomed by British India,<sup>21</sup> Juddha had deviated considerably from the earliest spells of positive identification.

The second significant achievement during Juddha’s regime was an experimental survey of industries and economy (*Audyogik Namunā* survey) conducted in 1944 in order to assess the economic conditions of areas from Sanga to Kavrepalanchowk and to recommend the possibilities of a nationwide survey in

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<sup>21</sup> British India was wary of Nepal’s proposed ‘industrial development’ and insisted on setting up a customs union with Nepal to protect the interest of Indian industries, which was rejected by Nepal. See file number 788–X/40 - secret, Industrialization of Nepal, External Affairs 1940, NAI.



the future. It is on the heels of this survey that the ‘Land Bhorgage [sic] Bank and Co-operative Society’ was established to rid the poor from the oppressions of local money lenders, what was described as the cause of degeneration of the agricultural community (Pande 1987, vol. III: 234). Following this experimental survey, a second nationwide survey was conducted in 1945 in order to gauge the impediments to *unnati* (Pande 1987, vol. III: 269).

Both endeavors were ministered mainly by two men: Major General Bijay Shamsheer Rana and Bhim Bahadur Pande. While both men were educated in Calcutta University, the former was the prime minister’s confidant and the latter was the author of the five-volume memoir *Tyas Bakhatko Nepāl*. According to Pande, he and his superior Bijay Shamsheer were accustomed to speaking in English and sprinkling Nepali sentences with English words, a habit they had acquired during their student years in Calcutta. He writes that in the mid-1930s the systematized development of Nepali language was yet a far cry and translating English words into Nepali was a daunting task, even for the educated. ‘Therefore’, he writes, ‘even if those educated in English used Nepali translation, the listener would not understand quickly – due to the mistranslation of English words into Nepali.’ Hence a preference was given to English words whose Nepali translations were not yet standardized (Pande 1987, vol. III: 240).

In the letters exchanged between Nepali prime minister or his aide and the British envoy stationed in Nepal circa 1937, the phrase economic and industrial development occur frequently. Similarly, Juddha Shamsheer is also known to have established a ‘development board’ in 1935 with the purpose of expediting ‘development’ activities.<sup>22</sup> This board was later named the Udyog Parishad (The Commission for Industry). Similarly, the establishment of the agricultural council, department of mines, department of cottage industries, bureau for the collection of news on industries and commerce (*Audyogik Vyāpār Samācār Saṃgraha Aḍḍā*), Nepal museum, department of forestry, department of horticulture, zoo and a technical school were other achievements. Although these later organizations were given Nepali names, the first ‘development board’ retained the English word. The explanation given by Pande explains Juddha Shamsheer’s preference for the English word development, the Nepali translation *bikās* not having become the standard then, in spite of the availability of the word *bikās*.

Although it is likely that Juddha Shamsheer and his ministers had learnt of the word development from the British in India, British officials themselves used the term ‘process of industrialization’ instead of ‘industrial development’ or ‘economic development’ to refer to the flurry of industrial activities in Nepal’s Tarai border in the 1930s. In the sources examined here, it was only in 1938 when a note from the commerce department of British India referred to the ‘industrial development’ of Nepal<sup>23</sup> and was subsequently used with reference to Nepal, for example, by the Calcutta-based magazine *The Modern*

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<sup>22</sup> Letter from the Prime Minister of Nepal to H.M.’s Minister in Nepal, January 24, 1937, Question of the imposition of excise duty on sugar etc. imported from Nepal into British India. Question of concluding a trade agreement with India, in file number 616–X, 1937, External Affairs Department Notes, Serial nos. 1–16, NAI.

<sup>23</sup> Notes by R.K. Nehru, July 13, 1938, notes in the central board of revenue, Question of the imposition of excise duty on sugar etc. imported from Nepal into British India. Question of concluding a trade agreement with India, in file number 616–X, 1937, External Affairs Department Notes, Serial nos. 1–16, NAI.

*Review* (1939) in describing Nepal's early efforts at 'development'.<sup>24</sup> What this suggests is that although the word development was Western, the British themselves were not its active propagators in Nepal.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the English phrase industrial development had established itself in the limited confines of Nepali administration by the mid-1940s. Interestingly, however, instead of its Nepali translation, *audyogik bikās* or simply *bikās*, it was the Nepali word *unnati* that was more common. Unlike these examples from correspondence between Juddha Shamsheer and the British minister which was written in English, the Nepali sources speak of progress or *unnati*, and not *bikās*. This is evident in the speeches by Rana prime ministers as well as the examples discussed below from the Kathmandu-based literary magazine *Śāradā*.

However, before turning to *Śāradā*, the notion of modernity or *ādhunikatā* needs to be addressed. Describing the achievements of Juddha Shamsheer, including his industrial ventures, *The Modern Review* wrote the following, 'Nepal is fast advancing towards modernization and acquiring international status' and that 'The mainstay of Nepal is agriculture. His Highness wants to improve it on modern scientific lines...' (*The Modern Review* September 1939: 282–283). In spite of this Calcutta-based magazine attributing Juddha's endeavors to the influences of modernity, in the sources examined here, the words *ādhunik* (modern), *ādhunikatā* (modernity) and *ādhunikikaran* (modernization) do not appear prominently. When they do, modernity is associated with the inventions of science and technology (*ādhunik bigyān*)<sup>26</sup> or in connection with the 'modern world', *ādhunik saṃsār*.<sup>27</sup> While the superfluous use of *sabhyatā* and *unnati* is evident in the fiery speeches of Ranas and their subjects who wield these potent words to argue their case and is also abundant in magazine essays and editorials with titles bearing either of the two words and where the authors ponder and debate over the meanings of *sabhyatā* and *unnati*, the words *ādhunik* or *ādhunikatā* are neither abundant nor persistent. The point of this is that in the 1930s and 1940s *ādhunik* and its derivatives were not the vocabulary of choice to describe the Rana rulers' interest in industries or foreign goods. While modern inventions and foreign goods invited the curiosity of the rulers and their subjects (Liechty 2010), to be modern was not the end goal. Rather, modern practices and goods were potent symbols of a *sabhyatā* towards which the Ranas aspired.

## 2.5 Defining *sabhyatā* and *unnati*

This section looks at the earlier issues of the literary magazine *Śāradā* published from Kathmandu by Riddhi Bahadur Malla between 1935 and circa 1955 for a brief summary of what *sabhyatā* and *unnati* signified. *Śāradā* was published from Kathmandu under the gaze of Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer, who is credited for giving wings to literary geniuses the likes of Laxmi Prasad Devkota, Siddhicharan Shrestha, Balkrishna Sama, Lekhnath Poudel and other luminaries of Nepali literature. Prior to this, writers and publishers were carefully scrutinized and the *Gorkhāpatra* offered limited space for literary creativity within Nepal. Although *Śāradā* was not free from censors and Rana policing, it heralded a greater degree of creativity and an important period in Nepali satirical writings.

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<sup>24</sup> Describing the second industrial exhibition, *The Modern Review* writes, 'Nepal, on her march towards progress, is now being engaged in a programme of industrialization...under the present regime the government is steadily following an enlightened policy of economic development' (*The Modern Review*, November 1939: 579).

<sup>25</sup> The practice of referring, in English, to economic and industrial 'development' increased in the 1940s when British India began taking interest in Nepal's 'hydroelectric development' and attempted to persuade Nepal to a joint hydro-development scheme that would benefit Nepal and the United provinces, Bihar and Bengal.

<sup>26</sup> *Śāradā* 1: 1 v.s. 1991 Falgun, 5: 2 v.s. 1996 Jestha.

<sup>27</sup> *Gorkhāpatra* v.s. 2001 Jestha 3.

A survey of the writings in *Śāradā* reveals consistent discussions on *sabhyatā*. While there were some attempts at defining its semantics, there were others that condemned blind imitation in its name. The following are some examples of the latter case.

...forty years ago blinking fireflies would light our path, today look at the dazzle of electricity. How beautiful was the hallowed land, enveloped by the pure shadow (*puṇya chāyāle dhākeko tapovan*), *nayā-sabhyatā* you have stolen it away, neither the taintless days, nor the peaceful times, neither the pastures, nor the *samdhvani*. Look! Where has that day gone? Today that pure land has turned arid, like beauty drained of its colors. The absence of the monastery has turned it to a crematory. (*Śāradā* v.s. 1991, 1: 1)

A similar criticism is found in the poem titled *Sabhyatā*. According to the poet, *sabhyatā* represents commodification and the obsession for spectacles, boots and pantaloons, glass ware, leather goods and fountain pens. *Sabhyatā* is referred to as an endless parade of Western goods and its ensuing indebtedness (*Śāradā* v.s. 1992, 1: 6).

Along with such criticism, there were other less abrasive attempts at defining *sabhyatā*. Essays such as ‘The Loss of Ancient Knowledge in the Search for Novel *Sabhyatā*’ (*Navīn sabhyatāko khojmā kehī prācīn vidyāko lop*, *Śāradā* v.s. 1993 2: 8), ‘Effects of Literature’ (*Sāhityako prabhāv*, *Śāradā* v.s. 1995, 4: 11), ‘The Surge of Sabhyatā’ (*Sabhyatāko bhel*, *Śāradā* v.s. 1996, 5:8) and ‘*Sabhyatā*’ (*Śāradā* v.s. 1997, 6: 5) are some examples. Instead of berating the mimicry of the West, these attempt to draw parallels between the arts and *sabhyatā*. One example is the essay ‘One Cannot be *Sabhya* by Distancing from Literature’ (*Sāhitya dekhi vimukh bhaera sabhya huna pāimdaina*, *Śāradā* v.s. 1995, 4:12), which argues that the dichotomy between ‘European civilization’ and ‘Asian civilization’ is incorrect. It claims that one who is able to harness from the riches of science and literature is an epitome of the *sabhya* (civilized).

A lengthier essay titled ‘In Search of *Sabhyatā*’ (*Sabhyatāko khojmā*, *Śāradā* v.s. 1996, 5: 8) probes into the semantics of *sabhyatā*. Although it begins by asking what the words *sabhyatā* and *saṃskṛiti* (culture) mean, the bulk of the essay concentrates on *sabhyatā* and is devoid of any discussions on *saṃskṛiti*. According to it,

Due to the expansion (*phījāi*) of people and ideas from across countries and (expansion) of rails, telegraph (*tār*), business-commodities, people are beginning to recognize each other. If a Nepali and a Japanese...are kept together and are observed for their attire, food, customs it will come to light that different, different people have their own *sabhyatā*...if the roots of one’s own *sabhyatā* is searched for and is compared with other *sabhyatā* one notices the tendency of the world where the effort is towards making one’s own (*sabhyatā*) *unnat* by throwing the ills and incorporating the good of another. It cannot be said that the world has one *sabhyatā*. There are different *sabhyatā* but the science that flows beneath them all can be the same. (*Śāradā* v.s. 1996, 5: 8)

The essay ‘*Sabhyatā*’ (*Śāradā* v.s. 1997, 6: 5), in attempting to elaborate the semantics, argues that *sabhyatā* is a composite of two words: *sabhā* (congregation) and *yogyatā* (ability). It claims that wise men who participate in esteemed congregations and are able to stir the moral and creative spirits of fellow countrymen towards the *unnati* of the country are worthy of being the bearers of *sabhyatā*. Elaborating further it states,

...today we wrongly assume that we are gaining a little bit of *sabhyatā* by associating with foreigners and so we are running after Europeans and other foreigners and only praising their work and wasting time. As a result, neither have we invented something new nor discovered any essential elements (*āvaśyak padārtha*). Again, we have been reverentially surrendering significant portions of our life and our wealth to their league.... However, now I am hopeful.... His Highness Shree Teen Maharaj Juddha Shamsheer Jang Bahadur Rana has considered this matter in depth and found that the main causes of the country’s *ava-unnati* (lack of *unnati*) is the disrespect for our hoary

skills and the praise of foreign objects and so has shown affection for each (skill and object) and set up various departments for these. (*Śāradā* v.s. 1997, 6: 5)

Hence, for the Rana-era subjects, *sabhyatā* was a demarcation between two worlds. It was common to juxtapose Nepal against a more *unnat sabhyatā* and to gauge the country's achievements or the lack of it. Awareness of the material progress made in different parts of the world resulted in a greater urge to imbibe from these various *sabhyatā*. However, there were differences between undignified pursuits of pseudo-*sabhyatā* and those considered worthy such as the pursuit of Western science and technology. The latter were unanimously agreed to be the mark of *sabhyatā* and the bearer of *unnati*. If so, what did *unnati* mean in Rana-era Nepal?

According to the essay published in *Śāradā*, *unnati* broadly referred to the enhancement of the *jāti* (race) through education, particularly by promoting education in the Nepali language. Interestingly, most essays that draw corollaries between language (*bhāsā*) and *unnati* have titles such as 'What Should Our Literary *Pragati* be Like' (*Hāmro sāhityik pragati kasto hunu parcha?*) (*Śāradā* v.s. 1992 2: 1), and 'The *Pragati* of Nepali Literature' (*Nepālī sāhityako pragati*) (*Śāradā* v.s. 1996, 5: 4 and v.s. 2004 13: 7). It should be mentioned that although the word *pragati* had become common by the early 1940s, the word *bikās* was rarely used, and it makes a rare appearance in one essay titled 'The *Bikās* of Our Nepali Drama' (*Hāmro nepālī nāṭakko vikās*) (*Śāradā* v.s. 1997 6:5). This is also among the earliest use of *bikās* in spite of *unnati* being the hegemon during the mid-1930s.

*Śāradā* was a newspaper that brought together an august group of Nepali writers who were also actively engaged with the translation committee, the *Bhāṣā Anuvād Samiti*, responsible for translating Sanskrit and world literature into the Nepali language as well as in the standardization of the Nepali language and in publishing the English-Nepali dictionary (Pande 1987 vol. III). Apart from the general meaning of *unnati* as progress, perhaps this is why *Śāradā* emphasized *bhāṣonatti* or the *unnati* of the Nepali language.

*Unnati* as *bhāṣonatti* during the Rana era has been explored by Chalmers (2003). He writes that the discourse enshrined three specific elements: educational, moral and thus sociocultural, and finally women's *unnati*, and that all three were part of the larger discourse on *bhāṣonatti*. He writes, 'whether abstract or concrete, *bidyā* is rarely mentioned without some accompanying reference to *unnati*, and frequently also to education as the primary means of achieving *unnati*' (Chalmers 2003: 125). Setting up of libraries was seen as an act of *unnati*, a measure to prevent the *adhogati* or decline of society. He also writes that the notion of *unnati*, although tied to *bhāṣonatti*, was flexible and encompassed a wide spectrum from the very conservative to the radically progressive since it could 'draw inspiration from reassuringly ancient Hindu values or from revolution in Russia: it could depend on great leadership or on the action of the masses: it could extol Vedic knowledge or embrace modern science and technology: it could look to morality or to economics for salvation' (Chalmers 2003: 145).

In demonstrating the ties between *unnati* and *bidyā*, Chalmers also points to the negative image among the Gurkha *jāti* regarding their place in the world. Although he claims that the new middle class felt powerless, disunited and backward, he does not link this negative self-image with the *sabhyatā* discourse that was then in prevalence, nor connect it to the word *asabhya*, antonym of *sabhya*. In the sources examined here, the word *asabhya* is not as profuse as *sabhya* or *sabhyatā*. Nevertheless, it appears occasionally, for example, in the *Kariyā Amlekh* speech discussed above.

These examples from *Śāradā* and the earlier cases of Chandra and Juddha Shamsher reveal that both the rulers and the *raiti* identified positively with the material progress of the *unnat muluk*, albeit with caveats as is evident in Juddha's call for self-reliance. However, there was a richer debate on the merits and demerits of the cultural and social elements of *sabhyatā* among the *raiti*. As such, the *raiti* appear

more ambivalent towards the sociocultural aspects of the *sabhyatā* of *unnat muluk* than do the rulers. Unlike the Rana rulers, the *raitī* were prone to defining themselves in term of the differences that set them apart from the other *sabhyatā*. Additionally, it was the *raitī* who championed the word *unnati* in place of the Rana preferences for the English word development, as will be discussed below.

## 2.6 Predominance of the word *unnati* in Rana-era Nepal

According to R.L. Turner's *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* compiled in 1931, Sanskrit is the greatest source of borrowing in the Nepali language with literature and religion being its main pathways. Translations of religious texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* have provided the Nepali language with a rich assortment of loan words, and it is from Sanskrit that words *unnati*, *bikās* and *sabhyatā* have arrived. He writes, 'Even when the inherited word exists or existed, there has been a tendency to replace it with the equivalent Sanskrit word, to use which is a mark of culture. Such loan words may appear either in their complete Sanskrit form (losing, only in certain cases, a final short *-a* of the Sanskrit stem) or, when widely used by all classes, may have been made to confirm to general phonetic system of Nepali' (Turner 2007[1931]: xii). Such is the case of *bikās*, its Sanskrit origin being *vikāsa* denoting bloom, blooming, expanding and even development. *Bikās* as development was not unknown in the early 1930s. However, both *bikās* and development were associated with biological growth, and not with what Juddha Shamsher called 'industrial development'.<sup>28</sup>

Turner claims that *unnati* is a loan word from Sanskrit and denotes elevation, dignity and prosperity. He writes that unlike *bikās*, *unnati* has been appropriated by Nepali without any alterations. Interestingly, *unnati* is not equated with the word progress. *Sabhyatā* is a loanword borrowed from Sanskrit without alteration and is used to denote politeness and good manners, while *sabhya* means the act of being civilized or refined.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> A similar symbiosis is also evident in Newari that is spoken by the Newars. The Newars, who regard themselves as the original residents of Kathmandu valley, have been at the center of Nepal's political life, and their language continues to be widely spoken in Kathmandu apart from the official language Nepali. Additionally, Newari is among the oldest of Tibeto-Burman languages with written inscriptions dating back to as early as 1173. The Newari parallel for the word *bikās* is an example of the symbiosis between Tibeto-Burman and Indo-Aryan or between Nepali and Newari. According to *A Dictionary of Classical Newari* (2000), classical Newari literature as well as legal documents were deeply influenced by Sanskrit and new Indo-Aryan since most of these texts were 'modeled on Sanskrit or Maithili prototypes' (ibid: xii). The dictionary mentions that conceptual, technical and ritual vocabulary were mostly loanwords from the above two sources, but by the nineteenth century 'there is a marked tendency to borrow and use learned vocabulary – so much so that very often only the grammar of the text is Newari, the lexical items are nearly all from loanwords' (ibid: xiii). The same dictionary contains the following three entries – *taodhanakāo/taodhanake* ('to make large'), *taodhinānali/taodhine* ('to grow up') and *taomā* ('big, tall'). The classical Newari translation for *bikās* does not exist.

Corroborating this, Newari linguists state that the word *bikās* does not have an equivalent in Nepalbhāsā, as Newari language is honorifically called. Neither do other technical and sociopolitical concepts. Repeating what is mentioned in the above-cited dictionary, they assert that these words and concepts are borrowed from Sanskrit or Nepali. However, they also agree that the word that comes closest to *bikās* is *ta:pu yāyegu* (which means to make big or large, in the sense of growth). The Newar linguist Omkareshwor Shrestha claims that this is not an archaic word but relatively recent. *Ta:pu yāyegu* was coined in modern times by combining a number and a noun with a classifier. In other words, *ta* refers to big or an indication of numerical strength, *pu* is the classifier and *yāyegu* means to do. Combined together, this phrase refers to the act of doing or becoming big or great. The words *unnati* and *pragati* do not have equivalent translations either and, when they are used in political discourse in Newari, *unnati* and *pragati* become loanwords borrowed for Sanskrit in their original.

<sup>29</sup> Turner's dictionary does not include the word *pragati*.

A second important dictionary of the Rana era is the two volume *Angreji–Nepālī Koś* (1938) published by the Nepālī Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti.<sup>30</sup> Here civilization is defined as the condition of becoming or making *sabhya*, as *sabhya* countries and as social progress. Development is described as *bikās* and as increase, particularly in animal and plant species, as the condition of good growth and *unnati*, as progression, completion and of becoming complete. It is also associated with the development of photographs. The Development Commission established in England in 1909 is also discussed. It is defined as a commission established with donations, the money for which can be donated to the *unnati* of agriculture, animal husbandry, commerce, etc. Unlike Turner’s dictionary, progress is associated with *unnati*. It is also defined as forward movement. ‘Progressional’ and ‘progressionist’ are defined as those who support *unnati* in political or social issues and ‘progressive’ is defined as people who believe in the successive betterment of life on earth.

As is evident from these dictionaries, *bikās* was a transitive verb associated with physical growth, quantitative increase and a process of becoming whole and complete. This action of increasing and becoming complete was not associated with the interventionist approach to development that, in the case of the West, was already pronounced by the early 1900s with the dual mandate (Rist 2006[1997]).<sup>31</sup> *Bikās* as intervention would only happen in the 1950s after the fall of the Rana regime, with planned economic growth entering political language along with the flow of international aid in the form of funds, materials and technical knowhow.

*Unnati*, too, was a transitive verb often combined with *unnati* of the Nepali language or the *unnati* of women and was devoid of any interventionist element. However, in defining progress as ‘forward movement’ and civilization as ‘social progress’, the second dictionary indicates the presence of evolutionist perspectives within *unnati*. Interestingly, the Rana-era ‘industrial development’ was akin to an interventionist approach that also incorporated social elements such as welfare (*bhalāi*) and improvement (*sudhār*) of its subjects that was tied to the *sabhyatā* rationale. However, Juddha’s ‘industrial development’, for which he sought technical advice and assistance from British India, was not tied to financial aid such as that of the post-1950s.

Despite these lexical meanings, however, sources examined in this chapter rarely mention *bikās*. Furthermore, limited references to ‘industrial development’ are subordinated to the more popular Nepali word *unnati*. The reason for the popularity of *unnati* over *bikās* is associated with attempts at standardizing the Nepali language. Begun in the early 1900s, standardization of Nepali language had gained significant ground by the time Juddha Shamsher was discoursing on ‘industrial development’. Unlike fascinations for the English language among the aristocrats, those non-Ranas at the forefront of the *bhāṣonni* efforts seem to have taken English as a challenge. Although the main proponents of Nepali language could not have been unfamiliar with the word development, its absence was mainly because they were working against the ‘encroachment’ of Western *sabhyatā*. Therefore, rather than concerning themselves with a Nepali translation for development or for other English words, their concern was mostly directed towards strengthening, systematizing and standardizing the Nepali language. As has been discussed earlier, the Ranas identified positively with Western *sabhyatā* whereas

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<sup>30</sup> The Gorkhā Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti established in 1913 during the reign of Chandra Shamsher was later renamed Nepāl Bhāṣā Prakāśinī Samiti. It worked towards standardizing the Nepal language.

<sup>31</sup> There is little agreement on the origins of development as a modern concept in the West. According to Koponen (n.d.), scholars have variously pinned down its origins to European colonialism and to the nineteenth-century French positivists (Cowen and Shenton 2004[1996]), to the 1919 Versailles Peace Conference and the mandate system (Easterly 2013), in the east, to Sun Yat-sen’s ‘development plan’ for China (Alcade 1987, Easterly 2013 and Helleiner 2014) and, while acknowledging its pre-history, to the Truman’s Point Four program (Rist 2006[1997] and Arndt 1987).

the non-Ranas were ambivalent. The result of this ambivalence was a distancing from the language of the ‘other’ *sabhyatā*. While the prime minister picked up words and phrases from the English language and sprinkled them in letters and correspondence with the British, the non-Ranas avoided this since they were the gatekeepers of the Nepali language.

In his essay *Hāi Hāi Aṅgreji* (Hail English), the poet and writer Laxmi Prasad Devkota (who was also member of the translation committee, the *Bhāṣā Anuvād Samiti*) expresses his disdain for the English language. Writing in 1940, Devkota tells of his early fetish for the English language, ‘I believed that we Nepali were not *unnat* (progressive) due to our lack of knowledge in the English language’ (Devkota 2010[1946]: 47). His early penchant was due to the belief that knowledge of English would open secrets to a new age, secrets hidden in the many English books written by an inventive and analytical society. However, this allure wore off as the poet realized that his thirst for English was only turning him into an *anuvād*, a translator devoid of any creative agency. He writes of coming to realize that in the disregard for the mother tongue, he was merely parroting a worldview very different from the *ārya-bicār*, Aryan views. Nevertheless, the poet concludes by admitting that in spite of half-baked parroting, English is the language of the twentieth century.

As member of the translation committee and as an eminent vernacular poet and writer, Devkota could not but defend his mother tongue from the intrusions of English. However, the closing paragraph where he admits the supremacy of the English language is a sign of the difficulties faced by an infantile language. By implication then, in spite of gatekeeping, a complete isolation was impossible.

Surya Bikram Gyawali (1933), a forerunner in the standardization of Nepali language and a contemporary of Devkota, writes that in spite of lack of proper research, it cannot be denied that Nepali language has borrowed not only from local dialects spoken across Nepal, such as Newari, Magar, Gurung, Rai and Limbu, but from dialects spoken in Hindustan, such as Farsi. However, he writes that this infiltration is prominently visible only after the Anglo-Nepal War of 1814–1816 and that prior to the war Nepali literature reveal a greater borrowing from Sanskrit than anywhere. Why should this be so? Gyawali answers,

When Hindustan was ruled by Muslims, the language of governance was Persian. Since Persian was the language of governance, it also entered other languages of Hindustan. Bengali has 2500 Persian words according to the Bengali historian Sri Suneet Kumar Chhatopadhyaya. While we were divided into small *rājyas*, our kings could manage without the use of Persian words, but as Nepal expanded (*sāmrājya sthāpit garepachi*) it had to make use of Persian words to ensure that foreigners would understand our language of governance. (S.B. Gyawali 1933: 8)

Gyawali writes that written codes of conduct were uncommon when Nepal was divided into many fiefdoms. However, with the unification of the kingdom and increasing interaction with foreigners in the eighteenth century, a greater need was felt for written laws. In this process, many Persian words were borrowed by the Gurkha language. Coming closer to his time, Gyawali writes of how the Nepali diaspora settled in India accommodated non-Nepali words into the Nepali language. He writes that it is only natural for a diaspora to ‘forget’ the ‘purity of the language’ and adopt foreign words because they live in a foreign land where the majority is ‘stronger, *unnat* and more in number so the need to imitate and to abandon words or the practice of one’s own language and adopt their practice’ (S.B. Gyawali 1933: 18).

Therefore, Nepali writers in the early 1930s and 1940s were not unfamiliar with the cross pollination among contemporary languages. They were all too aware of the loan words Nepali had acquired from Sanskrit, Persian, Hindi and Bengali. However, for Gyawali, Devkota and others working on standardization in Rana-era Nepal, the task was to raise Nepali from being a colloquial speech to one that was also rich and sophisticated literarily. Surrounded by the literary traditions not only of Sanskrit

and Persian but of Hindi and Bengali as well, the pioneers of Nepali standardization would not be too enthusiastic about the infiltration of English, particularly if this enthusiasm was demonstrated by the Ranas. Hence, while *unnati* and *sabhyatā* were used by the Ranas and their subjects to mean progress in industries and in education respectively, the word development remained confined to the pages of Rana correspondences because it was a word that had not yet captured the attention of the Nepali diaspora in the Indian subcontinent. The English word development was pervasive among both the British rulers and the struggling Indian nationalists since the 1920s, with the word having established itself in Indian political vocabulary (Zachariah 2012[2005]). Although a parallel trend is not observed in the Nepali literary circle of Darjeeling, Banaras or Dehradun of the same period, development as *bikās* would eventually enter Nepali political vocabulary in the subsequent democratic era, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

## 2.7 Conclusion

While the Rana elites of early twentieth-century Nepal were fascinated by English words, for their educated subjects who were not unfamiliar with English, the preferred language of communication was Nepali. In the jostle between languages, it was the Nepali word *unnati* that merged the Western notions of both progress and development.

However, in Western historiography of ideas, progress and development do not share a common lineage, nor have they been coalesced as in the case of Nepal. The idea of progress is believed to have an ancestry longer than that of development, but the bifurcation between progress and development is believed to have become prominent after the rise of industry and capitalism.

Nisbet (1980) charts the evolution of the idea of progress in the Western world. He argues that progress has been understood as a linear, cumulative enfoldment of the past, present and the future, a linear progression which gradually shed its secular hold in the beginning of the seventeenth century with the works of Turgot and successively with Adam Smith, Condorcet, Comte, Marx, Mill and Spencer (Nisbet 1980: 179–236). In spite of this secularization, Nisbet's book emphasizes that the idea of progress is engrained in moral, spiritual and otherworldly pursuits.

Cowen and Shenton (2004[1996]) examine the idea and the practice of development in the nineteenth and twentieth century. Unlike Nisbet who focuses on the metaphysics of progress, Cowen and Shenton argue that in the historiography of Western thought, development was 'invented' to counter the faults of progress, particularly the negative consequences of industrialization such as the loss of social, political and economic order, and not, as colonial historians claim, as a means of humanizing colonial exploits through, for instance, the dual mandate of 1922. Koponen (n.d.), in discussing the colonial legacy of development, agrees with Cowen and Shenton's interventionist approach to development, adding that it is the interventionist approach that differentiates development from its parallel progress. He, however, disagrees with their claims that the lineage of interventionist approach can be traced to Comte. Rather, Koponen argues, interventionist development took place not just in a particular European locale but across Europe in different contexts and in the colonies as well.

Additionally, Koponen writes that under colonialism, development was one among the many competing notions such as progress, improvement, betterment and civilization. Based on his works in Tanzania he writes, 'of these, civilization was the most important...and did much the same job during colonialism as development has done after it...When Africa was colonized, the main legitimizing device was not development but "commerce and civilization"' and that development gained a foothold as colonialism withered (Koponen n.d.: 11). As such, the biological notions of development associated with the process of unfolding or unrolling began to include social and political processes as well.



Unlike the West, Nepali *unnati* of the Rana period was distinctly secular. It represented an ambiguous assortment of expectations and not to definite goals. Development, on the other hand, was specifically used to mean industries and the economy. It was not used to mean educational reforms or the attempts to systematize the Nepali language, then called *bhāṣonmāti*. Development was measurable and centered upon short-term achievements. This is exemplified by Juddha Shamsheer's industrial ventures and the keenness to establish natural resource-based industries. Additionally, the users of the development vocabulary were limited. The word is mostly visible in the correspondence between the Rana rulers and British officials. Even the word development written in the Nepali script was uncommon among the works of non-Rana literate populace.

Regardless of its limited presence, Juddha's 'development' was not an 'invention' to counter social disorder resulting from the progress of industrialization as Cowen and Shenton discuss of the Western case. Although Juddha's regime was marked by increasing political discord which was to stimulate the rulers' concern for the decadence of the youth, industrialization was only partially meant to tame unruly subjects. Rather, it was *sabhyatā* that legitimized industrial development. Nepali society of the pre-democratic era was conscious of alien societies which it considered more civilized than itself. The ideas examined in this chapter, industrial development included, were the results of contacts and comparisons with these alien societies. They resulted from the subordination that was felt, the positive identification and the appraisal of Nepali *jāti* as it encountered a *sabhyatā* different from itself. Progress or *unnati* became a process of transformation made possible by 'industrial development' but with *sabhyatā* as the end goal.

### CHAPTER III: FROM DEVELOPMENT TO *BIKĀS*: NEPAL'S TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY AND THE EMERGENCE OF A CONCEPT

When the Rana regime was replaced by democracy in 1951, it ushered a new political setup and provided hope for socioeconomic transformation. It was *bikās*, a relatively obscure word until the late 1940s, that summed up these hopes for a better future. *Bikās* represented a new set of values and connotations that was slightly different from *unnati*, the dominant concept of the Rana era.<sup>32</sup> As discussed in the earlier chapter, *bikās*, however, was not a neologism coined at a particular historical juncture in response to changed political circumstances. The word existed in Rana Nepal but was remolded in the 1950s to suit new political aspirations. In exploring the emergence of *bikās* as a sociopolitical vocabulary, this chapter not only augments its genealogy but demonstrates that sociopolitical concepts are far from being inert, lifeless entities. They are repositories of societal transformations.

This chapter has two aims. The first is to understand the historical circumstances under which the Nepali word *bikās* came to be associated with development in its modern sociopolitical connotations. The second is to illustrate that *bikās* encapsulated the divergence between rapid political changes and halting socioeconomic transformations of the 1950s. Additionally, in exploring these aims, I encounter *pragati*, a parallel concept that was interspersed with *unnati* in the late 1940s and jostled with *bikās* in the 1950s. Although *pragati* retreated into the background with the ascendancy of *bikās*, it would reemerge at other political periods, significantly in the works of the Maoists. It is therefore important to discuss its early history, prominently in the political writings of the Nepal Praja Parishad.

The chapter begins with a brief summary of the events surrounding the transition to democracy, after which it discusses the parallel notion of *pragati*. Next the chapter draws from sources such as the Chester Bowles correspondence, the first plan document and the late 1950s magazine called *Vikās* in order to discuss the circumstances under which *bikās* came to be associated with development as espoused by the earliest American aid programs to Nepal. It then looks at land reform initiatives of the fifties and some of the works of the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala in order to discuss the incongruities between political and socioeconomic changes and the role of *bikās* in blurring these contradictions. The conclusion revisits the two aims in order to examine whether or not *bikās* was a concept in the Koselleckian sense.

#### 3.1 The transition from autocracy to democracy

In February 1951, the Rana Prime Minister Mohan Shamsheer bowed to popular pressure, making way for a coalition government that was to include the Ranas and members of the Nepali Congress and was to function under the leadership of King Tribhuvan. This was after the king returned victoriously from his three-month asylum in New Delhi, where a pact was concluded between him and the Ranas, also known as the Delhi Compromise of 1951 since the deal was brokered in New Delhi by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Tribhuvan was welcomed by euphoric crowds that hailed him as the father of democracy in Nepal. His sudden flight to India in November had caught the Ranas by surprise,

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<sup>32</sup> The *sabhyatā* discourse of the Rana period was eclipsed by the rise of the development discourse in the 1950s. This, however, was not a Nepal-specific phenomenon but global. In explaining the decline of the notion of civilization with the rise of new and supposedly more objective standards such as the GDP, Rist writes, 'notions of primacy linked to "civilization" appeared rather dubious, because they willy-nilly placed the West in competition with other civilizations or cultures. But national statistics with their mathematical aura of objectivity, seemed to offer a more acceptable basis of comparison' (Rist 2006 [1997]: 76).

prompting a series of hasty machinations such as the crowning of Tribhuvan's three-year-old grandson prince Gyanendra (who in 2001 became King Gyanendra) as the new Shah heir and the meeting of the nonexistent 'parliament' to discuss 'constitutional' reforms but to no avail. Following the king's asylum in India, the downfall of the Ranas was rapid and not very violent apart from a few incidences in the Tarai areas led by the Nepali Congress.

The Ranas had reduced monarchy to a ceremonial symbol devoid of real power. Although his predecessors resigned to Rana confinements, King Tribhuvan had begun testing its limits in the late 1930s. Clandestine contacts with the anti-Rana groups outside the palace walls fueled his aspirations to reassert power, and with common goals to end Rana rule, the king joined force with the anti-Ranas, mainly the Nepali Congress, prompting the events described above.

The Nepali Congress has been smoldering under Rana rule. Founded in 1950 through the merger of the Nepali National Congress (1946) and the Nepali Democratic Congress (1948), it operated mostly from India and brazenly challenged the Ranas after Indian independence in 1947 when newly democratic India was sympathetic to its cause. Although prominent members of the Nepali Congress were inspired by Gandhian teaching and carried out nonviolent Satyagraha against the Rana regime in 1947 in the Tarai towns of Biratnagar, Ilam and Janakpur, they did not denounce needs for an armed struggle in Nepal either.

Accompanying the king's flight to New Delhi, the Nepali Congress launched an armed struggle in the Tarai. Using an abandoned air strip in the Nepal-India border, anti-Rana pamphlets were airdropped and Birgunj was 'captured', where a parallel government was set up. Simultaneously, the *Mukti Senā*, the armed band of the Nepali Congress led by K.I. Singh, fought the Rana troops along the Tarai border in attempts to capture towns such as Biratnagar, Parsa, Dang, Kailali, Kanchanpur and Palpa (Gupta 1993 [1964]). However, the *Mukti Senā's* armed revolt was quickly quelled by Rana troops. Hence, although the transition from autocracy to democracy was not nonviolent, an armed rebellion was not its basis (ibid).

What expedited this transition was the compromise brokered in New Delhi in which the Ranas, realizing independent India's lack of support for their regime, agreed to constitutional reforms that would hand over the reins to an elected constituent assembly but in the meanwhile an interim government composed of the Ranas and people's representatives would manage governance. The Ranas also agreed that King Tribhuvan should continue as king. Prominent leaders of the Nepali Congress were weaned away from their armed revolt and cajoled to accept the compromise. In his autobiography, Matrika Prasad Koirala, then president of the Nepali Congress, writes that the party was never consulted in the deal and had to abandon its struggle that was only beginning to pick up (Koirala 2008). This half-baked victory stigmatized certain elements of the Nepali Congress such as the K.I. Singh faction who, calling the compromise a betrayal, continued with armed struggle.<sup>33</sup>

Soon after, an Interim Government of Nepal Act (1951) came into operation. This Act was not replaced by a Constituent Assembly as had been promised. It was amended during the 1950s and was later replaced by the Panchayat constitution in 1962. It was this Interim Act that guided the transition of the 1950s.

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<sup>33</sup> K.I. Singh parted ways with the Nepal Congress, set up the Rakshya Dal, caused a mutiny in the police force in January 1952 and escaped to China, where he remained till 1955. Similar 'insidious' activities were also carried out by the Gorkha Dal set up by disgruntled Ranas under the leadership of Bharat Shamsher, great grandson of Chandra Shamsher, to destabilize the coalition.

Although it was based on the Indian constitution, the Act vested the king with a wide set of executive, judicial and legislative powers. The king, in whom the supreme authority rested, was to be aided by a council of ministers and an advisory assembly that was devoid of legislative authority. The Act also declared the king to be the supreme commander of the army. Bearing strong resemblance to the Indian constitution, the Act contained lengthy articles on directive principles of state policy concerning the welfare of the people in social, economic and political matters, as well as clear articulation of fundamental rights. Commenting on the Act, Anirudha Gupta writes, 'Against the background of the general state of lawlessness, administrative chaos and limited resources of the government, these directive principles, indeed, appeared somewhat utopian. Perhaps, this happened because of the over-enthusiastic imitation of the Indian model by its framers which made them lose sight of the real conditions existing in their country' (Gupta 1993[1964]: 58).

What Gupta does not mention, perhaps because he lacked the advantage of hindsight, is that the 1950s was a perilous decade for Nepal, placed as it was between two realities, the political reality of a newly won democracy and the social reality that was accustomed to hierarchy, filial bonds and patrimony. Nepal's transition from autocracy to democracy was not a revolutionary transformation that swept the entire nation by its force. It was mainly confined within pockets of the Tarai and Kathmandu and was championed by a small, enthusiastic band of literate members. The democratic wave of 1951 was a political transition. Its significance lay in culling an unrepresentative regime and replacing it with one that allowed democratic political participation.

The aim is not to deny or depreciate the achievements of 1951 but to emphasize its limits. This explication is important since this study attempts to understand how significant developments in the political life of Nepal affected the concept of *bikās* and vice versa. Nepal's history has only recently witnessed anything akin to an accelerated sociopolitical upheaval that is the cumulative effect of the 'revolutions' of 1951, 1990 as well as the decade-long Maoist uprising (1996–2006). However, the earlier two 'revolutions' were popular movements that led to regime changes. They were not a rapid and violent plunge towards a new social order and class relations.

Nevertheless, the political changes of 1951 witnessed the emergence of new institutions and actors such as political parties, legislature, judiciary and bureaucracy. To this was added the entry of foreigners and the accompanying 'development' apparatus. This diverse conglomeration resulted in a political language that was quite different from that of the Rana era. Unlike the Ranas, the new political class was unapologetically enraptured with the West and was willing to borrow, be it financial aid or ideas. It is in this context that *bikās* was to appear.

According to Koselleck, periods of revolutions are periods when basic concepts are minted. Confining its case to Europe, *Begriffsgeschichte* claims that concepts such as progress, revolution, and emancipation acquired a new meaning, completely different from its original semantics during the upheavals of 17th and 18th century. This occurred because the sociopolitical changes opened up previously uncharted spaces of experience. The predictability of tradition was ruptured by the unpredictability of a society hurled into modern times. Hence, new words or words with radically altered meanings appeared and evolved into concepts that could bridge the gap between the experience of the past and the expectations of the future.

In the case of Nepal, in spite of the less than 'revolutionary' nature of regime change, certain words did appear with greater proliferation such as nationalism, democracy and development. The earlier political era had seen the predominance of *sabhyatā* and *unnati*, particularly *unnati* of the mother tongue. The decade of the fifties saw a gradual distancing from the Rana era *unnati* and *sabhyatā* towards a greater use of *bikās*. However, *bikās* did not replace *unnati* in one jagged tear. It appeared alongside the then

hegemonic *unnati* as an annex until the mid-fifties and was also interspersed with *pragati*. It was the hullabaloo of ‘planned development’ that resulted in the ascendancy of *bikās*.

### 3.2 *Pragati*

#### 3.2.1 *The vocabulary of the revolutionaries*

Nepal’s first political party, Nepal Praja Parishad (NPP), was organized discreetly in Kathmandu in 1936. Its founding members were Dashrath Chand, Dharma Bhakta Mathema, Jeevraj Sharma, Ramhari Sharma and Tanka Prasad Acharya. They were unflinching in their commitment to end the Rana regime and to establish democracy and constitutional monarchy. Operating in a repressive environment, the members cautiously tested the waters through anonymous or pseudonymous articles in *Jantā*, a newspaper published from Patna in India.

The main theme running in these articles is criticism of the opulent lifestyles of the Ranas, their misuse of state treasury and the apathy towards their subjects and towards *sudhār* (improvement).<sup>34</sup> What is also frequently criticized is the recruitment of young men into the British army. The publicity it gained through *Jantā* helped the party expand its network among the Nepali diaspora. It came into contact with disgruntled members of the Rana faction such as Jayprithvi Bahadur Singh and Mahendra Bikram Shah in Calcutta, who assisted the party with cash and helped arrange for an old typewriter to take back surreptitiously to Kathmandu (Pande 1987, vol. III: 127). It is with this typewriter that the party prepared four anti-Rana leaflets that were stealthily disseminated in congregational areas, school and college halls in Kathmandu in 1940.<sup>35</sup>

The first leaflet is addressed to the Ranas. It begins by calling their attention to the Parishad’s aim ‘...to make the Nepali citizen free from your evil clutches and through acquisition and *unnati* of knowledge, esteem, wealth and religion elevate the glory of the country among the *sabhya jāti* of the world’ (Gautam 2005[1986], vol. I: annex 18). The Ranas are derided as charlatans who feed their insatiable hunger for wealth and power while disregarding their responsibility towards *jāti* and religious *unnati*.

The remaining three leaflets are addressed to the people. Reframing their goals, the second leaflet states that the Nepal Praja Parishad seeks the *pragati* of the nation and the downfall of the Ranas. Written as a monologue, it blames the Ranas for amassing riches while the poor Nepali is deprived of the fruits of his toil and forced to exist as a Rana slave. It prods the reader to come out of slumber and to support the Parishad’s cause, a failure to do so will only assert that the Nepali brother is an ‘effeminate’, unfortunate fool. These were provocative words for people accustomed to being spoken mostly through the veil of morality and dharma obligations. Thus the leaflet ends with a *slok* from the Gita that justifies war, if war meant the destruction of the ‘unscrupulous’ Ranas (ibid, annex 19). The third leaflet is an attempt to educate its reader of the qualities of a good government and an honest ruler. According to it,

the government is not anyone’s personal property. Government is a part of a *sabhya* society. It is an institution meant to implement the rules formulated by society. Hence the government should

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<sup>34</sup> Some examples are *Nepāl ki vartamān hālat* (‘Present condition of Nepal’, September 1, 1938), ‘The Unfortunate Kisans of Nepal’ (February 23, 1939), ‘In Nepal. The Country of the Vicious Ranas’ (July 6, 1939), *Nepālī yuvak sāvadhān ho!* (‘Beware, Nepali Youth!’, August 11, 1939) in NAI, File ‘Janta’, file no. 627–X/38, 1938.

<sup>35</sup> These leaflets do not bear titles. They contain the signatures of the party president. The first and the third leaflets mention dates, possibly the dates when they were disseminated, while the second and fourth leaflets are undated. However, we know that all four were disseminated within short intervals in the Nepali month of Asadh (mid-June to mid-July) (Pande 1987, vol. III; and Gautam 2005[1986], vol. I). For this bold move, most of its members were sentenced to death. Tanka Prasad Acharya and Ram Hari Sharma were spared execution as they were high-caste Brahmins.

operate according to the wishes of society. Rules are like a rope binding members of a society. Hence none has the right to make rules apart from the society. A society that is debarred from this (rulemaking) right is not an independent society. (ibid, annex 21)

The final leaflet contains a riot of accusations hurled at the youth. They are accused of being incapable of revolutionary fervor, accustomed as they are to enslavement by the Ranas. It calls out the youth to be brave and rise to the service of the country (ibid, annex 22). With these leaflets, the Praja Parishad emerged from its seclusion and attempted to spark a political awakening among the inhabitants of urban Kathmandu. They were the first organized attempt at public condemnation of the Ranas. It allowed people unassociated with the Nepal Praja Parishad a peek into their own pent-up grievances. However, Rana repressions were strong, fears of persecution still deep and the time not yet ripe for a popular uprising. The people of Kathmandu valley could not come out in support of the party and the revolutionaries soon became martyrs.

Since the main aim of the four leaflets was condemning the Ranas, which they do recklessly, there is not much room given to discussing outcomes of the freedom that would be won. This is because these were political propaganda typed on little pieces of contraband paper and meant to be circulated stealthily; these were not a political manifesto. Nevertheless, they do provide a glimpse into a future imagined by these martyrs. The future was democratic, and although the word democracy is not used, the third leaflet's definition of good governance is an indication. The future was also one of *unnati* and *pragati*, and references to these were typically coupled with *sabhyatā*. Since the previous chapter discusses Rana era notions of *unnati* and *sabhyatā*, the newcomer therefore is *pragati*.

It is difficult to extract a definition of *pragati* based solely on these leaflets. This is because the leaflets refer to *unnati* and *pragati* on one occasion each and without much elaboration. In both cases, they are made with reference to the future of Nepal. The only slight difference is that while *unnati* is used in connection with knowledge, wealth and religion in the first leaflet, *pragati* is used in connection with freedom from poverty in the second leaflet. However, in these cases *pragati* and *unnati* could be interchanged and the meanings would remain unaltered.

The English translation for *pragati* is progress, so is it for *unnati*. As will be discussed in subsequent pages, the political writings of the 1950s reveal a tendency to interchange *unnati* and *pragati* as synonyms. What makes the situation muddy is that in everyday language *pragati* and *unnati* are considered synonymous, and my attempts to describe their genealogy may appear to some to be nothing more than nitpicking over nothing or, at best, the futile pursuits of academia!

However, that is not the case. Although *unnati* and *pragati* were and are used interchangeably in everyday parlance, some probing reveals that in certain political factions, *pragati* began to diverge from *unnati*. This divergence is not visible in the four leaflets, whose significance lie in introducing *pragati*. Nor is it visible in anti-Rana activities launched in the north Indian towns in the late 1940s or in the political speeches of the period. It is after the overthrow of the Rana regime that *pragati* begins to appear distinctly in the writings of the reconstituted Nepal Praja Parishad led by Tanka Prasad Acharya, one of the two survivors.

While Tanka Prasad Acharya was serving his jail sentence in connection with the leaflet incidents, the anti-Rana movement picked up in India mainly under the leadership of the Nepali Congress then present in two different groups. Like the Nepal Praja Parishad, the Congress members were single-mindedly occupied with bringing the downfall of the Ranas. Deliberations on ideology, philosophy and long-term goals were acutely absent. The few surviving letters that Tanka Prasad wrote from jail refer to the lack of ideological engagements. His letter to Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala refers to this shortfall, along with a lengthy disapproval of Koirala's conduct and his 'dubious' nature (ibid, annex 29),

exemplifying the earliest signs of personality-based political rifts as opposed to political differences based on ideology. Some other letters exchanged between Acharya and a jail mate contains some engagements with Marxism and his interpretations of the ‘revolution’ then underway. Acharya writes,

Our country needs a revolution, a political revolution and social economic changes lie in coexistence. However, in our country there is no need to deliberate on social revolution. This is because the society’s economy is rotting under the Ranas, with the rich Ranas on one side and all the poor *prajā* (citizens) on the other. As a result, it is not difficult for our society to enter into a complete social revolution (*sāmājīk krānti*). Only the Ranas need to be ousted from politics. There is a growing divide between our country’s political, social and economic conditions. The society seeks a new economic order according to the needs of a new age. The country should be industrialized according to the new economic order. There will be no peace in society until there is economic equality. (ibid, annex 30-*kha*)

Acharya believed that a successful socioeconomic ‘revolution’ was only a short step away provided that the Ranas were overthrown. Although Acharya correctly identifies the interrelatedness of the political, the economic and the social, his inference that Nepal’s problem is a political problem reveals myopia that was not confined to him. The political actors of this period had been plentifully exposed to socialist writing in India. However, what they had failed to grasp was that India was waging a war against colonial oppression, whereas Nepal was contending with an internal enemy and had a social structure that was not the equivalent of India. India had the benefit of a substantially educated and cohesive leadership that was able to attract the lower and the middle social strata into the movement.<sup>36</sup> The Indian freedom movement was not fought by one man. Nepal, on the other hand, was faced with a small but conflicting leadership that was not able to bring various social strata and communities within its fold. Additionally, in attempting to replicate the tactics of Indian nationalists on Nepali terrain, leaders like Acharya misread class differences. Acharya’s division of Nepali society into two classes – the Ranas and the people – is an indication of this unfamiliarity since he assumes ‘the people’ to be a homogenous category. Although Acharya’s ‘class’ reading was quite different from those of B.P. Koirala, of whom more will be discussed later in this chapter, it was in the context of growing personal and ideological differences between the ‘Marxists’ and the ‘socialists’ that the word *pragati* would emerge to fulfill the need of the parties on the fringe to distance themselves from the dominant Nepali Congress.<sup>37</sup>

### 3.2.2 Defining *pragati*

Eleven years after the four leaflets were dispersed and the Parishad members executed, the Rana regime came to a closure. During the democratic decade, the party found a position in the Nepali Congress-led government of 1954 where Tanka Prasad Acharya was home minister. In 1955 the Nepal Praja Parishad merged with other smaller parties to form the Nepali Praja Party. It was called to form a government by King Mahendra in 1956 and remained in power for a very short interval. This government is mostly remembered for its pro-Chinese stance. Although the Party contested in the 1959 elections, it did not fare very well.

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<sup>36</sup> The Congress Socialist Party of India had, by 1930s, identified the peasants, laborers and ‘petite bourgeoisie’ as the strength of the party, claiming that the Indian bourgeoisie ‘is not in a position to play a revolutionary role’ due to its close ties with the colonizer. See Zachariah (2012 [2005]: 227).

<sup>37</sup> Other references to the Parishad’s Marxist influences are contained in the leaflet *Hāmro bāṭo* (Our Path) and in the founding member Ramhari Sharma’s speech where he states, ‘Praja Parishad is an organization established on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism’. See Gautam (2005 vol. II, annex 26).

It is under the changing political context that the party began publicizing its principles, the earliest of which is available in the form of a booklet called *Hāmi katā?* ('Where do we go?'). Issued by the *Navin Samājavād Samgh*, the reconstituted version of the Parishad, the booklet states that the party will champion the causes of the farmer and the laborer and that it will work for economic equality and agrarian reforms (ibid, annex 36). The booklet is brief and begins by describing the *bikās* of society from cave dwelling prehistory to a machine powered society that gave rise to capitalism. It refers to *bikās* in evolutionary terms, as was typical of Marxist readings. It also 'alerts' the 'oppressed' classes towards the possibility of a capitalist government in Nepal, stating that such a government can never be for the benefit of the farmer or the laborer. This leaflet does not contain any reference to *pragati*. Rather the evolutionary reference to *bikās* is among the earliest examples of a later precedence of referring to *bikās* in this manner. In Nepal, parties leaning towards communism made it a practice to differentiate between *bikās* and *pragati*. While they used *bikās* in connection with societal evolution, *pragati* was used to denote progress. For the left-leaning parties in Nepal, progress was an end goal that was free from the interventionist approach of *bikās* 'projects'. Additionally, as will be discussed in chapter six, progress was a socialist utopia attainable under an exclusively communist leadership.

In 1952, as the earliest disseminators of this trend, the Nepal Praja Parishad along with the Nepal Communist Party, the Nepal Women's Organization, the Pragatiśil Adhyayan Maṇḍal (Progressive Study Circle) and other '*pragatiśil*' (progressive) bodies joined hands to form the Jātiya Jantātrik Saṃyukta Morcā against the 'imperialist' designs of the Nepali Congress. A pamphlet by this Morcā accuses the Ranas, King Tribhuvan and the Nepali Congress of trying to malign the *pragatiśil* forces and urges the people to unite with the Morcā to fight for the country's peace, liberation and *pragati*. It accuses the Nepali Congress of joining hands with the feudal class and arresting the *pragati* of the nation. Frequent mention of words *pragati* and *pragatiśil* in reference to those groups that were not associated with the Nepali Congress marked the earliest attempts by the 'anti-capitalist' parties to distance them from the dominant political force.

But how did *pragati* differ from *unnati*? What did the Praja Parishad along with the other *pragatiśil* bodies mean by this word? Before a proper definition or definitions could be arrived at and before anyone earnestly tried assessing the differences, most parties and their leaders were confronted by inter- and intra-party maneuvers of the 1950s, and deliberations on the nature of *pragati* were sidelined. Therefore, in terms of meaning, sources pertaining to the 1950s indicate that *pragati* was an ill-defined substitute of *unnati*. During the decades that followed, *pragati* continued to function as the other without concretely defining what this otherness represented.

Interestingly, when the Parishad's leader Acharya was appointed prime minister in 1956, his ideological affinities with China received great publicity. However, instead of the usual references to *pragati*, Acharya's government was to opt for *bikās*. For instance, the report by his government on the *Praśāsan Punargathan Yojanā Āyog* (Administration Reform Commission) of 1956–57 is replete with the word *bikās*. The report mentions *prādeśik bikās yojanā* (regional development plan), *bikās* budget, *bikās* committee, district *bikās yojanā*, district *bikās* officers, *bikās* programs etc. From *bikās* officers to *bikās* funds, the utility of this word had grown exponentially. On the other hand, the party's preferred vocabulary, *pragati*, is rarely visible while Acharya was in office. This difference in language within and outside office, with *bikās* representing the official vocabulary, is partly due to the presence of the aid discourse beginning with the United States Operation Mission (USOM).



### 3.3 The Beginnings of development

#### 3.3.1 American influences

Diplomatic relations were established between Nepal and the United States in 1947. However, American involvement in Nepal's 'development' began when the two countries signed the Point Four agreement on January 23, 1951, weeks before the collapse of the Rana regime. This was followed by the establishment of the United States Technical Cooperation Mission on January 16, 1952. The first initiative of the mission was the Village Development Project established with the philosophy of

helping individuals and communities help themselves on a continuing cumulative basis...to bring about increased production, higher incomes and an improved standard of living to the hundreds of thousands of families thereby enhancing the economic status and general well-being of the entire nation. (quoted in Fujikura 2013: 95)

Such a 'bottom-up approach', as Fujikura calls it, was linked to the assumption that communities at the village level were most susceptible to communist threats. The Village Development Project was expected to counter possible communist subversions as well as provide impetus to Nepal's development process, then believed to accelerate or catch up provided foreign technological and capital input.

As a result, the program commenced by setting up a training center in Kathmandu to train men in agriculture technology who were, in turn, expected to disseminate these skills to village communities through satellite centers. It was expected to provide the push to the mission's long-term goals 'to develop among our [sic] people a feeling of unity and friendly helpfulness; a spirit of progress and achievement, and a love for liberty and respect for the individual.'<sup>38</sup> Although the impacts of this program were not as anticipated, it did contribute to a spike in 'village development' after 1959.<sup>39</sup>

The person in charge of the mission was Paul W. Rose, an agriculturalist by training. His correspondence with Chester Bowles, then ambassador to India and Nepal, are preserved in the Chester Bowles Papers of Yale Manuscripts and Archives and contain, among others, Rose's initial impression of Nepal as well as his 'memorandum for cooperative development' containing the above-mentioned goals. Rose penned his early impressions of Nepal in the following words,

Nepal is just now being freed of the noose of isolation which has been strangling her development for more than 100 years. The significance of this is shocking. Because the past century has brought to much of the world more improved methods and means of doing work; a greater rise in the standard of living for the masses; more widespread education and information for the multitudes than any preceding 500 years of human history. Thousands upon thousands of people in the interior of Nepal are using the same methods of doing their work that were being used 500 years ago in many parts of the world – largely because they are totally unaware of any other method or means of doing their tasks. Hundreds of thousands in this small country have never used electricity in any form; have never spoken over a telephone; have never ridden in an automobile, and almost as many have never seen an automobile or train. Until about a year ago no public cinemas or movies were allowed in the country. The great masses of Nepali people have never had any newspapers, radios or schooling. Less than one percent (1%) have access to modern medical services and facilities – all of this in a land that has the potential of being one of the richest countries of the world in proportion to its size.

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<sup>38</sup> Paul W. Rose, 'Purposes of the Cooperative Rural Development Service. Memorandum from Paul W. Rose to Chester Bowles,' *Himalayan Collections @ Yale*, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://himalayancollections.commons.yale.edu/items/show/1638>.

<sup>39</sup> For an assessment of the Village Development Project, see Mihaly (2009[1965]).

Nepal is short on capital and trained personnel to bring about sound and rapid development of its human and natural resources. However, it has three assets that can carry it a long way to the goal. These are an industrious population eager for improvement; a large reservoir of man hours of labor presently being wasted in idleness or unproductive work, and the best moment in its history for great and rapid progress.<sup>40</sup>

Paul W. Rose and his mission arrived in Nepal in order that they may supervise the ‘development’ of the country. It is not intended here to analyze, in detail, the underlying motive of American interest in Nepal in the Cold War scenario.<sup>41</sup> Nor is it a critique of early American perceptions of Nepal as a fresh slate on which to transpose development practice. Rather, the intention is to explore Rose’s conceptualization of ‘development’. This exploration is important since the Nepali protagonists had not yet become accustomed to translating development as *bikās*. While Rose was mulling over Nepal’s ‘strangled’ ‘development’ in 1952, the Nepali protagonists were trying to grapple with feelings of elation and trepidations that ensued from the *parivartan* (change) of 1951 and not with *bikās* per se. Although the Ranas had been using ‘development’ in connection with industries and economy, this practice was not yet strongly visible in the language of the new power bearers. Hence, Rose’s frequent use of ‘development’ deserves attention.

In the above extract, Rose associates development with material gains to be made in areas such as roads, education, health, and hydroelectricity, giving precedence to the soon-to-become practice of referring to these areas as *bikās* oriented. Additionally, Rose also conjoins development with democracy. Confident that Nepal’s recent ‘revolutionary’ experiences are optimal for ‘development’, he writes, ‘during the past few months Nepal has been going through the phase of a revolution to change the yoke of autocratic rule for the team harness of democracy....Unless the present government establishes rapidly and dynamically some constructive projects that will improve the conditions of a large portion of Nepal’s population, there is some doubt whether it will ever achieve the status of a sovereign democracy’.<sup>42</sup> It is under this urgency to prevent the newly won democracy from spiraling out of control that Rose directed the mission’s ‘projects’ targeting the rural communities and thus began the Village Development Project.

The central idea guiding the Village Development Project was ‘community development’ which, in turn, was not only focused on material improvements but was equally emphatic on fostering democracy. That Paul Rose’s articulations on development, particularly community development, were a confluence of development and democracy is discussed by Tatsuro Fujikura (2013). According to Fujikura, Paul Rose’s pedagogic approach to community development prescribed the ‘outsider’ not to impose but to work as a facilitator so that the community feels ‘as if’ the ‘ideas have emanated from them so as to further the process of awakening and moving to the next level’ (Fujikura 2013: 114). Concurrently, Fujikura argues that what Paul Rose was aiming at through the Village Development Project was to facilitate the Nepali government to gather knowledge about the country through maps,

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<sup>40</sup> ‘Statement of Situation by Paul W. Rose,’ *Himalayan Collections @ Yale*, accessed August 3, 2016, <http://himalayancollections.commons.yale.edu/items/show/1640>.

<sup>41</sup> These discussions are available in Mihaly (1965), Skerry et al. (1992) and Khadka (1997). Similarly, Robertson’s upcoming work *Front Line of the Cold War: The U.S. and Point Four Development Programs in Cold War Nepal, 1950–1953* narrate the Cold War context in which American aid operated in Nepal.

<sup>42</sup> Paul W. Rose, ‘Purposes of the Cooperative Rural Development Service. Memorandum from Paul W. Rose to Chester Bowles’, *Himalayan Collections @ Yale*, accessed March 24, 2016, <http://himalayancollections.commons.yale.edu/items/show/1638>.

census, statistics in order that it could facilitate the government to reach the masses, to expand and establish democracy.

Paul Rose associated development with rapid, short-term material gains, bolstered by the political momentum of democracy. Such an association between development and democracy was not the making of the USOM entirely, since anti-Rana proponents of the 1940s had also pinned progress, *unnati* to the abolition of autocracy. Nevertheless, progress and development were not exactly synonymous. Progress was the combined aspiration of the Ranas and the anti-Rana factions. When Paul Rose and the American mission arrived in Nepal with their democratic ideology and ‘development’ expertise, the new power bearers in Nepal gradually shifted from the ambiguity of *unnati* to the initially less ambiguous and supposedly more democratic idea called development, which the new regime translated as *bikās*. As will be discussed subsequently, the Nepali protagonists of the 1950s gave greater emphasis to the material components of development than to its political associations with democracy. Ironically, the associations between *bikās* and democracy would only be established during the king-led ‘guided democracy’ of the Panchayat years and is a separate story to be recounted in the next chapter.

Before discussing how Nepali interpretations of development briefly uncoupled from democracy, it will be useful to describe the earliest events surrounding American and Indian entry into Nepal’s development arena. Democratic Nepal’s first Prime Minister Matrika Prasad Koirala is almost a forgotten figure today. His premiership coincides with the official release of development assistance from the United States and India to Nepal as well as with Nepal’s initial attempts to lay the foundations of democratic governance. Matrika Prasad, or M.P., Koirala was reticent in comparison to his outspoken younger brother B.P. Koirala. Apart from his incomplete autobiography *A Role in a Revolution* (2008) which contains letters exchanged between him and his Indian counterpart Jawaharlal Nehru, a telling source of India’s *raison d’état* for financial assistance to Nepal, M.P. Koirala did not leave anything else in writing.<sup>43</sup>

Along with critiquing the Delhi Pact of 1951, the autobiography contains twenty-eight letters exchanged between Koirala and Nehru from December 1951 to August 1954. The letters reveal the Nepali prime minister’s difficulties in dealing with political and administrative discord, both of which overshadowed ‘development’, a difficulty he felt comfortable confessing to Nehru. Similarly, the letters reveal a powerful country’s attempts to maneuver the internal politics of its infantile neighbor covertly through financial and technical assistance but overtly with startling rebukes unbecoming of a powerful leader.<sup>44</sup>

Nepal’s request for Indian assistance begins with the prime minister writing in April 1952 for an enormous number of Indian staff to train and assist Nepal in her transition to democracy. Nehru complies but sends five officers. However, this is accompanied by repeated calls to coordinate Nepal’s foreign policies with India. The increasing presence of Americans in Nepal was a cause of discomfort to India. A perturbed Nehru writes that Nepal ‘consult’ and ‘coordinate’ its foreign policies with India, including requests for foreign assistance as well as employment of foreign nationals (Koirala 2008: 233–234). This is followed by Koirala’s letter explaining how the Americans showed interest in Nepal. According to Koirala,

When I was in Delhi in the first week of January last Mr. Chester Bowles referred in his talk to the request made by us to the Govt. of India for financial and technical help and that he too would try

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<sup>43</sup> An earlier and possibly a complete draft of his autobiography was lost by the Indian publisher to whom it was entrusted. *A Role in a Revolution* is the later draft which stops where M.P. Koirala’s role as prime minister begins. The autobiography was published posthumously in English (Koirala 2008: vii– xvi).

<sup>44</sup> For instance, Nehru’s letters in Koirala 2008: 243, 254, 283 and 303.

to extend Point 4 Aid if it would be possible. Besides, he said that a certain American expert employed by the Govt. of India for urban community planning would like to visit Kathmandu during his summer vacation and by the way give his advice to us if we so desired.... Some of my colleagues were in Delhi in the last week of April to discuss the matter of help with the Govt. of India. Some members of the American Embassy saw them and tried to discuss the development projects so that they could plead for extension of the Point 4 Aid. (Koirala 2008: 235)

From the Nepali prime minister's letter, it appears as though the beginnings of American interest in Nepal were not premeditated but the result of chance encounter and curiosity, which later developed into the Village Development Project. However, this was not the case. As Robertson discusses in his upcoming work, the Americans were deeply concerned about losing India to the 'Communist Orbit' and had, in 1951, taken steps to prevent such a possibility by extending the Point Four to India and Nepal, the latter considered to be on the 'front line of the cold war' (Robertson forthcoming). The Nepali prime minister was either unaware of American interests in the region or was evading an unreasonably probing Nehru who was keen to entrench Nepal within Indian influences.<sup>45</sup> Out of the twenty-eight letters exchanged between Koirala and Nehru, some ten letters are either about Nehru's efforts to cull Nepal's contacts with Americans and later with the Chinese or about the Nepali prime minister's efforts to placate Nehru. Unfortunately, Matrika Prasad Koirala's letters to Nehru are silent on his version of development, confined as they are to party politics.

### 3.3.2 Translating development as *bikās*

With the inflow of foreign assistance in the early 1950s, 'development' becomes a frequently cited word in the sources of the USOM. However, the Nepali translation for 'development' was not yet standardized. The three words that came close to development were *unnati*, *pragati* and *bikās*. The first, *unnati*, was associated with Rana era notions of progress such as *des unnati* or *bhāṣonnati*. The second, *pragati*, had become popular with the left-aligned parties on the fringe, such as the Nepal Praja Parishad that preferred it over the more popular *unnati*. Therefore, what remained was *bikās*. Originally signifying biological growth, *bikās* was an obscure word until the late 1940s. However, from 1951 onwards it becomes visible in political discourse quite suddenly, although not superfluously.

Fleeting references to *bikās* quickly turned to regular discussions surrounding *yojanā* (planning). This is visible, for example, in the many *bikās*-related editorials of *Āvāj*, democratic Nepal's first private daily newspaper.<sup>46</sup> This is also visible from the speed with which the government institutionalized planned development in the 1950s. The Ministry of Planning and Public Works was set up in 1951–52 but was renamed the Ministry of Planning and Development in 1955, the summary draft of the first Five-year Plan was published in 1956, Planning Commission Act was passed in 1957, Planning Commission was established in 1958 and Central Bureau of Statistics set up in 1959 (Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979]).

The association between *bikās* and planned economic growth is attributed to global, post-war planning trends such the Marshall Plan in the West and the Soviet model and the dominance of the former since

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<sup>45</sup> My thanks to Mark Liechty for pointing out the first possibility.

<sup>46</sup> See for example, *Nepālko vikās* (Nepal's *Bikās*, *Āvāj* 1: 261), *Vikās tathā yojanā* (*Bikās* and Planning, *Āvāj*, 1: 284), *Śikṣāko vikāśko nimti ke jarurat cha?* (What is Required for the *Bikās* of Education? *Āvāj* 1: 33) and *Nepālmā khelkudko bikās* (The *Bikās* of Sports in Nepal, *Āvāj* 2: 35). Also seen are headlines such as *Śānti nikunja vidyālayako vikāśako āśā* (The hope for the *Bikās* of Shanti Nikunja School, *Āvāj* 1: 101), *Nepālmā udyog ra vānīya vikāśko brhat yojanā* 1993[1979] (Comprehensive Plan for the *Bikās* of Commerce and Industry, *Āvāj* 1: 114), *Pānī, aspatāl, myunisipalitīyko vikāśko vistrī rīpoṛt* (A Report of the *Bikās* of Water, Hospital, Municipality, *Āvāj* 1: 116).

‘the political implication of these (Western) models seemed more tolerable and also because Western aid was more readily available’ (ibid: 29). As a result, *bikās* as planned development coincided with the launch of the American-led Village Development Program and the first Five-year Plan a few years later.<sup>47</sup>

In preparing the first Five-year Plan, Nepal was ‘assisted’ by the United Nations adviser Harry B. Price as well as the Indian Administrative Services. In fact, Nepali involvement in its preparations was minimal, reasons being the lack of expertise, that a minimally educated people emerging from autocracy were unable to comprehend the technicalities of planned development (ibid). Mihaly writes in his now classic book that the plan ‘never played the role marked out for it, namely to give a sense of direction and coherence to the multi-faceted development effort’ (Mihaly 2009[1965]: 78). He and others after him have pointed out that statistical evidence, the core of planned ‘development’, was conspicuously absent, as was the political will to implement it.

The English draft of the first Five-year Plan contains nineteen thematic sections – village development, agriculture, cadastral survey, cooperative societies, land reform, irrigation, forestry, transportation, communication, power, industry, mines, commerce and tourism, Rapti valley multi-purpose project, resettlement and government housing, health, education, trainings, survey, research, statistics and publicity (Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission). These themes were to become the basic elements of development in the coming decades. However, in this first plan, they were far from well-articulated. Issues such as land reform, agriculture and industry contain little in terms of concrete reforms envisioned by the newly democratic polity. Instead, the focus stays within the confines of infrastructural and ‘scientific’ interventions. The enthusiasm for technology is consistently present in the plan, coupled with the propensity to phrase development as economic and social development but with little elaboration of the social elements. The document associates economic development with economic growth. Economic growth is linked to increased production, which, in turn, is associated with technology and capital such that ‘extraordinary increase in output maybe achieved’ (ibid: 1). The document, however, admits that Nepal’s biggest hurdles are the lack of capital and adequate technology but that this can be overcome provided a planning model that is as statistically precise as it is administratively sound. However, statistics and administrative efficiency were not Nepal’s strengths either, the inadequacy of which is repeated on thirty-two separate occasions in the plan document (Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979]: 164).

There are certain segments of the document that are better articulated than others. Agriculture, village development, irrigation, trainings and administration are slightly more explicit than land reforms, power, industry, communication, minerals and mining or commerce and tourism. This is because the plan was partly based on ongoing activities of USOM and Indian programs. Since American and Indian assistance extended beyond implementing ‘projects’ and well into the drafting of the plan document, the articulation of Nepali needs is done in non-Nepali words. Therefore, we see the rise of the English word development as opposed to progress. Had the first Five-year Plan been based on Nepali expertise, the word progress would have garnered greater use than ‘development’. The absence of any reference to *unnat muluk* (progressive countries) and *sabhya saṃsār* (civilized world) are signs of this non-Nepali influence on the plan document. Only five years earlier *Āvāj* carried a report on Harry Truman’s Point Four program with the headlines, ‘Assistance to Countries That Lack Progress’ (*Unnati nabhayeko*

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<sup>47</sup> The first plan was democratic Nepal’s earliest forays into ‘planned development’. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, it was preceded by a survey that attempted to assess the economic conditions of areas then called *Purva nambar ek* and to advise on the possibilities of a nationwide survey in the future as part of the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamsher’s attempts to industrialize Nepal (Pande 1987, vol. III: 228).

*deśharulāi sahāyatā*, *Āvāj* 1: 23) revealing that the practice of referring to Nepal as *a-bikāsīt*, undeveloped, had not yet made its mark in 1951. Instead, Nepal was a country lacking *unnati*. Quite clearly, therefore, the rise of development vocabulary in Nepal was associated with increasing foreign presence that went beyond projects and financial assistance. However, in spite of this looming presence, the associations between development and democracy that Paul Rose and the American mission emphasized in the early days does not receive equal emphasis in this document apart from a brief and hurried correlation in the early pages.<sup>48</sup>

The main document of the first Five-year Plan is written in English. The Nepali draft of the plan is a summarized version of this English draft meant for Nepali readers not accustomed to English. In summarizing the nineteen themes enumerated above, the Nepali draft makes numerous references to *bikās* and occasionally speaks of *unnati*. References to *unnati* are made in connection with the *unnati* of the country (*des unnati*), *ava–unnati* (lack of *unnati*) and *sarvāṅgiṇ unnati* (holistic *unnati*).<sup>49</sup> This indicates that the distinction between *bikās* and *unnati* persisted within Nepali speakers and readers and therefore within Nepali written sources. In spite of the superfluous use of *bikās* and development in the first Five-year Plan, the Nepali readers were still accustomed to *unnati* as the overarching goal. However, for those drafting the first Five-year Plan, it was the English word development that held greater weight over the English word progress. Hence, the preponderance of the Nepali word *bikās* over the more common *unnati* in the Nepali translation of the first plan document.

The point of this elaboration is to emphasize that *bikās* was not a continuation of the earlier Rana era debates on *unnati* – *bhāṣonnati* or *des unnati*. *Bikās* was a response to the presence of new and powerful agents – the aid providers – and the discourse they brought with them. It was because of this new agent that the Nepali notions of progress, of *unnati*, and *des unnati* came to be replaced by *bikās*. The Nepali word *unnati* was not able to accommodate the elements of development that were vigorously articulated by the USOM. Although development was already an ambiguous concept globally, when it was used in the Nepali context in the early 1950s, it referred to planned economic growth aided by technology transfer and bolstered by democratic values. These could not accommodate with *unnati* because *unnati* had also been the vocabulary of the Ranas whose ethos was different from that of the new agents.

The word *bikās* received significant fillip in December 1957 when a magazine was published in this name by the government's planning body (*Yōjanā Maṇḍal*). It remained in publication for four years. The first nine issues of the periodical were published between December 1958 and November 1960 and are examined here. That the government should decide to launch a magazine named *Bikās* is proof of how this word catapulted from being the shadow of the more popular *unnati* in the early 1950s to an idea capable of fanning the hopes of an emerging democracy of the late 1950s. According to its editor Satya Mohan Joshi, this magazine resulted from the need for publicity by the *Yōjanā Maṇḍal*, the then planning body that was responsible for everything related to 'development'. Established after 1951, the *Yōjanā Maṇḍal* was headed by Bhim Bahadur Pande, who had actively participated in the Rana Prime Minister Juddha Shamsheer's industrialization drive. Pande picked up the young Joshi to work for the *Yōjanā Maṇḍal* as program officer, and the latter's first act was to begin publishing two magazines, one called *Vikās* and the other called *Nirmāṇ* (Creation). The naming of these magazines were Joshi's own decisions. They did not involve consultations and deliberations. On being questioned why he decided

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<sup>48</sup> This omission is not limited to the plan document but is also apparent in the government-sponsored magazine on development named *Vikās*.

<sup>49</sup> *Hāmro pratham pañcavarṣīya yojanā, saṃkṣipta paricaya*, (Our First Five-year plan, Summary), Yojanā Maṇḍal, His Majesty's Government, Nepal.

on these particular words instead of *unnati* or *pragati* or something else Joshi said, ‘development requires *nirmāṇ*. Hence these names.’<sup>50</sup> Emphasizing that *unnati* and *bikās* did not mean the same thing, Joshi states that he selected *bikās* because it represented ‘projects, trainings, skills, orientations, labor and statistics at the national level, whereas *unnati* meant progress.’ The articles published in the magazine *Bikās* reveal this emphasis upon projects, trainings, statistics etc.

It also reveals that by then the word *bikās* had become as common as *unnati*. In keeping with the trends established by the first Five-year Plan, the magazine contains phrases such as *grām bikās* (village development), *ārthik bikās* (economic development), *audyōgik bikās* (industrial development) and *bikās yōjanā* (planned development), phrases used specifically in connection with economy and technology. It must also be mentioned that in all the sources discussed in this chapter, there are occasions when *bikās*, *unnati* and even *pragati* are used interchangeably. Although such exchange confuses semantic and genealogical explorations, they do not undermine the thesis that these words eventually diverged into different trajectories.

To get back to the magazine *Vikās*, most of its articles unanimously decry Nepal’s technological inaptitude. There are calls for a strong technical division within the government as well as for the establishment of schools that can impart technical knowledge. Echoing the concerns stated in the first Five-year Plan, low productivity, low savings, inadequate capital, lack of information, statistics, surveys, effective land reforms measures and an effective administration are often reiterated as hurdles to be overcome (*Vikās* 1: 1, 1: 2, 1: 3, 1: 7).

Awareness of the gulf separating Nepal from the rest of the *bikasit* (developed) countries had dawned prior to the 1951 political change. Earlier, these were articulated through the *sabhyatā* discourse. Post 1951, the *sabhyatā* discourse fades away and the comparison is given a new nomenclature, that between the *bikasit* countries and the *a-bikasit* (undeveloped) ones. However, there appears to have been some confusion before the word *a-bikasit* came to represent Nepal and other economically less endowed countries. The tendency to use words such as *kam bikasit* (less developed), *pachillā khālākā des / pachauṭe des* (country lagging behind/ country that is behind) and the more positive *bikās unmuḥh* (*bikās* oriented) were interspersed with the later standardized *a-bikasit* (*Vikās* 1: 2, 1: 3, 1: 4, 1: 5, 1: 7).

Therefore, between 1957 and 1959, *bikās* had come to represent the Nepali translation for development. Simultaneously, *bikās* had come to mean planned development. The rationale for planned economic growth, according to the USAID’s retrospective assessment, was that Nepal could ‘catch up’ with the rest provided the ‘missing pieces’ of technology and capital investment since ‘Nepal’s development problems were not a matter of reconstruction, but of formulating the basic structure of a pre-industrial economy’ (Skerry et al. 1991: 7). Hence the association with trainings and statistics. However, unlike *pragati*, which leaned towards Marxist ideology, *bikās* was supposedly neutral. It was unconnected to any political, moral, spiritual or philosophical strain as in the case of India (Zachariah 2012[2005]: 8). Additionally, the earliest associations between development and democracy that were espoused by Paul Rose were also lost in translation since the Nepali sources examined here do not state such associations. Once adopted in Nepal, *bikās* acquires a life of its own and the coupling with democracy is temporarily stalled.

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<sup>50</sup> Personal communications with Satya Mohan Joshi.

### 3.4 Between rhetoric and reality

#### 3.4.1 Land reform initiatives

This chapter claims that Nepal's transition from autocracy to democracy witnessed a lag between accelerated political change and hesitant socioeconomic transformation. This lag is exemplified by the earliest land reform efforts. An equitable land redistribution policy was considered the first step to a progressive society and was quickly taken up by two prominent political parties, the Nepal Praja Parishad and the Nepali Congress. The former's stance on land reform is briefly mentioned in its manifesto when its leader Tanka Prasad Acharya was released from jail following the end of Rana rule.<sup>51</sup> A similar brief reference is also found in the Nepali Congress's manifesto, *Nēpālī Kāmgreskō Ghoṣaṇāpatra*, published in 1950 (Giri 2009: 15). However, since the preservation of historical sources is modest in the case of Acharya and the Nepal Praja Parishad when compared with the enthusiasm for the Nepali Congress and its leader B.P. Koirala, it appears as though the Nepali Congress was more committed to an 'economic revolution' based on land redistribution than the Parishad.

In his essay *Hāmroṁ nayām kadam* (Our New Step), the Congress leader B.P. Koirala stresses on land reform without going into its depths and possible complications (Giri 2009: 36–42). Written in 1952 when his brother and party co-worker M.P. Koirala was prime minister of the newly democratic government, this essay simply emphasizes the importance of land reform. It does not explicate the party's proposal on how it could be implemented.

In spite of the Interim Government of Nepal Act of 1951 declaring the abolishment of certain forms of landholding, there was a lull before legislative reforms were eventually passed in 1957. According to M.C. Regmi, the 1957 Land Act sought to grant security of tenure to tenants, adjusted the rents payable to landlords and prohibited them from imposing extra demands on tenants in terms of money or labor (Regmi 1996[1976]: 198). On paper, these were practical-sounding legislations. However, they were never effectively implemented because the landholding class viewed the Act as a challenge to its supremacy. On the inadequacies of these land reform measures, one author writes,

Various land reform laws were passed during the period 1951–1963 (most notably the 1957 Land Tenancy Act, the 1959 Birta Abolition Act, and the 1963 Agricultural Act), culminating in the 1964 Land Act, which mandated the first land ceilings and redistribution in Nepal's history and remains the country's 'magnum opus' on land reform. All of these laws were the product of an ongoing discourse on land reform, one feature of which was particularly striking: all the major political parties and the monarchy eventually developed nearly identical positions in favor of Birta abolition, protection of tenancy rights, land ceilings and land redistribution. However, despite this rhetorical unanimity, legislation was enacted only after years of talk and political posturing, and, except for the Birta Abolition Act, it remained largely unimplemented. (Gill 2009: 219)

The same author concludes that 'in the political discourse surrounding *birtā* abolition, tenancy rights, land ceilings and redistribution, all actors sought the *appearance* of working for land reforms in favor of the peasantry, even if they held no real commitment to implementation' (Gill 2009: 254–255) but were motivated either by populist slogans, in the case of the political parties, or by prospects of appearing 'progressive' in case of the monarchy (Gill 2009). The political transition of 1951 was important in legislating liberal, democratic principles where former subjects were transformed into active citizens. However, whether they are legislations pertaining to land reforms or to other

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<sup>51</sup> *Hāmi katā* ('Where do we go'), Nepal Praja Parishad, Navin Samājjvād Samgh, undated. Reproduced in Gautam 2005[1986] Vol. I, annex 36.



sociopolitical rights, they remain merely legislations if the power wielding minority is resistant to the changes that will ensue.

Unlike the West where deliberations on ‘progress’ were the result of the belief in unlimited human potentials then exemplified by the industrial revolution, *unnati* became a part of the Nepali imagination as a result of Nepal’s early contacts with industrialized and industrializing nations and her desire to stand at par with these countries, which, in turn, stemmed from the rulers’ sensitivity towards Nepali *sabhyatā*. Nepal lacked capital and technological knowhow necessary to industrialize. It was a society divided according to caste rules and where social codes were rigidly followed. Although poor, it could hardly be called frugal with social life, particularly in Kathmandu, centered on festivities and with very little incentive to invest in non-communal, non-agricultural sectors. This picture of social life remained unchanged in spite of the regime change. In the 1950s, Nepal’s agrarian economy revealed no signs of movement towards non-agrarian forms of economy. Simultaneously, the emergent polity lacked the will to intervene through an agrarian reform.

Since the ‘revolution’ was not mass based, a small cohort was thrust into the political epicenter with little experience in statecraft. Nepal’s political class had to chart a program for the future regardless of the socioeconomic status quo, regardless of the absence of an upheaval that shook the socio-structural foundation. Under such circumstances, it was rhetoric more than reality that kept political parties afloat. The writings of B.P. Koirala illustrate the difficulties of a political figure exposed to ‘progressive’ ideology but unable to accommodate these into the socioeconomic reality of his time.

### **3.4.2 B.P. Koirala’s political rhetoric**

Bisheshwor Prasad Koirala, modern Nepal’s revered leader of the democratic movement of 1951, spent most of his youth in northern India, where not only did he pursue scholarly interests but also imbibed from the political energy of the Indian freedom movement. Koirala was a prolific writer, and his books are widely read even today. Sustained interest in his political thoughts have resulted in several compilations of short essays written at various stages of his political career, of which this chapter focuses only on one – *Viśveśvarprasād Koirālā Rājñītik Abhilekh* (2009) – because it is a collection of most of Koirala’s early works that are relevant for this chapter. In the presence of abundant academic interests on Koirala, what is intended here is not a scrutiny of his socioeconomic position during the 1950s but an assessment of how he phrased these socioeconomic issues. What were Koirala’s most potent concerns and what kinds of words were frequented by him to describe these concerns? Furthermore, what does the blending of these words and the issues they describe tell us about Nepal of the 1950s?

In his preface to the book, the publisher, Pradeep Giri, writes that Koirala was mainly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi, by the Indian socialist leader Jay Prakash Narayan and Karl Marx. Giri also claims that in spite of strong socialist imprints in his early writings, Koirala’s political strategies were always those of Gandhian Satyagraha. Since Koirala believed the works of Indian socialists such as Acharya Narendra Dev, Jay Prakash Narayana and Ram Manohar Lohia to be applicable to Nepal, he did not consider an exclusively Nepali socialist interpretation necessary. Giri writes that Koirala’s essays on Gandhi, on democracy and socialism and some of his interviews make up for this lack of a single doctrine (Giri 2009: vi).

If Koirala was imbibing from the ideological currents in India, it would be useful to briefly look at the Indian intellectual terrain at the dawn of independence before delving into Koirala’s writings. Zachariah (2012[2005]) does just that. According to Zachariah, Gandhi refused to accept definitions of ‘backwardness’ since it emphasized the lack of material and bodily perfections and was in contrast to his moral and spiritual interpretations. The 1930s were testing times for Gandhi since many within the

Indian National Congress had begun criticizing him for his inability to provide clear guidance on industrial development which they believed was the future of India. Gandhi's moral rhetoric received flak from the 'men of science', India's recent socialist recruits. The criticism was mainly centered on Gandhi's idea of trusteeship, the idea that the possessing class should hold property in trust for the nation and for their less fortunate countrymen. Additionally, there was disenchantment with his anti-machine stance.

Zachariah discusses how Gandhi sought to address such criticisms with help from his close associate, J.C. Kumarappa. Gandhi realized that if he wanted his way – that of decentralized village-based economy – he would have to speak a language that was not veiled in moral rhetoric. He had to speak the language of science. However, Gandhi was hesitant to part from his ethical arguments and therefore Kumarappa, a trained charter accountant with an additional MA in public finance, became the translator of Gandhian moral ideas into economic rationality. Kumarappa attempted to present an Indian socialism that was nonviolent but 'scientific'. Since the goal was to be modern but not Western, he drew upon Indian antiquity to project a modern India that did not draw its modernity from the West but from its own philosophical heritage. He praised the joint family system and the division of labor by caste. Reinterpreting the caste system, however, he claimed that it was not based on birth but on one's motives. Similarly, Kumarappa drew heavily upon the East-West dichotomy, claiming that Eastern civilization was based on philosophical and conscious planning, whereas the West was haphazard and power hungry. What Zachariah does is to show that Gandhi's take on development in the 1930s and 1940s had been to expunge the West from the 'modern' and to replace it with development that did not mean science and technology but one that could be found in Indian antiquity. Zachariah argues that Gandhi's interpretations were not the same as those of mainstream Indian nationalism, the latter having assimilated 'science', 'socialism' and 'national discipline' as basics of 'development' (Zachariah (2012[2005]: 211).

Among the 'intellectual bourgeoisie' of India of the 1930s, 'development' was strongly associated with 'planning'. This association stemmed from, but was not confined to, socialist readings. Zachariah refers to the works of the economist N.S. Subba Rao and to articles by the *Socialist Congress* to elucidate the presence of non-socialist discussions that refer to the advent of planning to the beginnings of the twentieth century with the breakdown of the laissez-faire and not with Russian experiments. Then there was the exclusively socialist reading of S.C. Mitter's *A Recovery Plan for Bengal* along with the presence of big industrialists that tied development to planning. Divergent versions of 'planning' culminated with the formation of the Congress' National Planning Committee (NPC) in 1938. According to Zachariah, this committee deliberately underplayed socialism in order to accommodate non-socialists. The book also discusses the contentions between the Gandhians, the socialists and the private enterprise owners and how the voice of the socialists eventually surpassed the other two.

Simultaneously, debates on 'development' were also connected to science and rationality, which, in turn, were linked to industrialization and technological advancement. Its main proponents were Meghnad Saha and P.C. Mahalanobis, both involved with the National Planning Commission. During this period, arguments that claimed that the West was the fountainhead of science were refuted in the volumes of *Science and Culture*. According to the counterargument, it was the East 'where originated all those arts and crafts which are responsible for the greatness of the present European civilization' (ibid: 239) and therefore it was only rightful that the East should now attempt to reclaim science. The achievements of Jagdish Chandra Bose, P.C. Ray, and C.V. Raman provided legitimacy to this argument and positioned Indian science on an equal footing with the West.

Zachariah argues that the debates on development in the 1930s were centered on nationalism and socialism, although the contentions between socialism and capitalism were not resolved, nor were those

between Gandhian thought and socialism. However, it was the common fight for independence and the need to chart out future ‘development’ based on Indian-ness that had kept these together.

Since Nepal’s earliest political class began their career apprenticing with the Indian freedom struggle, one would imagine that they were exposed to these ideological and conceptual cleavages and contradictions. Although debates on the merits of one ideology over another existed, the problem that beset Nepal’s political class was different. A handful of educated, politically conscious members had fought against the Ranas mainly from Indian territory. Since they lived in India, their reference was the Indian freedom struggle. They were familiar with the ideological struggles in India but were not adept at translating these into the Nepali context. A ‘revolution’ could not emerge in Nepal simply by transposing Indian socialism or Gandhian philosophy.

That the decade of the fifties was not the most ideologically fertile times in Nepali history can be gauged from B.P.’s works, particularly his treatment of *bikās* and socialism. These reveals the predicament of a leader caught in the incongruities between ideological commitments and the peculiarities of his socioeconomic milieu. His writings recurrently refer to *bikās* as a socialist vision that encapsulates land reform, peasant empowerment and balanced agricultural and industrial development. However, the details of both *bikās* and socialism are not elucidated. Rather, he uses *bikās* as well as its parallels *unnati* and *pragati* to fill the void in his socialist goals, reducing both the ideology and the popular words to rhetorical repetitions.

Among the essays and speeches in *Viśveśvarprasād koirālā rājñītik abhilekh* (2009), B.P.’s socialist ideologies are perceptible in his 1952 essay *Hāmrō nayān kadam* (Our New Path). This essay is not a comprehensive socialist analysis of Nepal. Such a comprehensive analysis is not available in any of the essays and speeches included in this compilation. The fact that the entire corpus of B.P.’s works is famous for lacking in socialist details has already been mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, in this particular essay, one can glean some his ‘class’ readings. According to him, the ‘classes’ that came out in support of the *krānti* (revolution) in 1951 were the *pūjipati* (capitalist), the *jamindār* (the landowning class), farmers, manual workers, professors and wage earners (Giri 2009: 36). He also claims that the Nepali Congress was the party of the peasants since the *unnati* of the country was conditioned on the *unnati* of this class. Apart from these references, B.P. does not explicate further and leaves the reader wondering what he meant by ‘capitalists’ in the Nepali context when he was simultaneously lamenting Nepal’s lack of industrial or *audyogik bikās*.<sup>52</sup> Nor does he explicate how a socialist Nepal would accommodate the conflicting interests of these various classes, particularly the very prominent *jamindār* class. Similarly, what were his opinions of caste-based and ethnic divisions in Nepal? These queries remain unanswered. Nevertheless, his ‘class’ readings are an improvement when compared to the Rana era divisions such as those by Tanka Prasad Acharya discussed earlier, which placed the rulers and the aristocrats on one side and the *rāiti* on the other side of the ‘class’ spectrum. However, this and other essays reveal that in the 1950s B.P. was only beginning to identify the contradictions within Nepali society. Although he framed these contradictions in socialist terminologies, the process of mounting a socialist attack on Nepal was far from mature.

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<sup>52</sup> A facsimile of a letter by B.P. Koirala surmised to have been written in 1950 is reproduced in Uprety (1999). According to this facsimile, B.P. claims that in Nepal ‘there is no middle class, no capitalist class. There are two classes – Ranas and the rest’ (ibid: 23). Since the year in which the letter was written is not mentioned and since Uprety’s claims are based on his conversation with the recipient of the letter, Devendra Raj Upadhyaya, it cannot be ascertained whether or not B.P.’s class readings discussed above are a refinement upon this letter.

Similarly, the ambiguity of B.P.'s *bikās* is evident in many of the essays and speeches in this compilation, some of which are mentioned here. His first address to the nation as prime minister contains brief remarks on administrative reforms, land reforms, education, health, transportation, 'development programs' and industries (Giri 2009: 95–99). His speech at the seventh convention of the Nepali Congress mentions *ārthik bikās* (economic development), *sthāniya bikās* (local development) and *jillā bikās* (local and district development) (Giri 2009: 103–110). His speech at the *Taruṅ Dal* meet in December 1960 mentions *pragati*, *ārthik bikās*, land reform, *audyogik bikās* and socialism (Giri 2009: 137–141). Unlike other sources examined in this chapter, B.P. Koirala's writings reveal an unfaltering propensity for synonymy between *bikās*, *unnati* and *pragati*. He interchanges these words arbitrarily, using them to denote an extensive array of contemporary subjects from the immediate political concerns of an emerging democracy to the plodding and onerous 'economic and industrial development'. In his speeches as prime minister, B.P. uses *bikās* specifically in connection with industries and the economy, which is in keeping with the trends in the government discourse of the late 1950s where development was translated as *bikās* and was equated with economic planning. However, his tenure as prime minister does not bring *bikās* concretely closer to socialism in terms of semantics or practice. Rather, *bikās* is only rhetorically linked to socialism.

B.P. was aware of the tenacious grip of the past and the difficulties of mounting a socioeconomic 'revolution' akin to the political changes he and his party had championed. This awareness is recounted in a few of his earliest writings which stress the need for political stability – for elections, for a popular government to be established and for the *parivartan* to be brought to a closure. The earliest of such writings, the party's 1950 manifesto written by B.P. himself, outlines the causes and consequences of *ava-unnati* and stresses on the cross currents between political and economic changes. He emphasizes that token changes in the regime are insufficient in bringing about lasting *sudhār* (improvement). His essay *Pahāde vā madhesi bhavanāle mulukko unnati humdaina* (Pro-hill or pro-Madhesh Sentiments Will Not Bring *Unnati* to the *Muluk*, Giri 2009: 25–27) reflects his uncertainties stemming from the incommensurability between political changes and faltering socioeconomic ones, between the overthrow of the Rana regime and the establishment of democracy. He writes, 'since this *parivartan* has been very short and very big, many are not yet able to understand its importance. Political changes have not resulted in changes in the way we think. If our psychology remains the same as it was prior to the political *parivartan* the road to democracy will be strewn with many hurdles' (Giri 2009: 25). His essay *Yo antarim kāl ho* (This is the Interim Period) contain similar caution.

These, however, were not only B.P.'s trepidations but the shared experience of Nepali society grappling with change, as is exemplified by the many *parivartan*-related discussions and editorials in *Āvāj*, democratic Nepal's first independent daily newspaper (February 20, 1951–April 14, 1952).<sup>53</sup> Discussions on change and instability were quite frequent during the initial days of democracy. *Āvāj* too considered it an important subject, and it contains more than one editorial aimed at explicating the nature of *parivartan* and pacifying the readers against the uncertainties of political transition. *Āvāj* repeatedly reminds its readers of their *asabhya* (uncivilized) conditions during the Rana rule and that patience is needed in the face of *parivartan*. It exhibits a tendency to explain political instability in the

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<sup>53</sup> Editorials of the early issues of *Āvāj* contain reflections on the transition from autocracy to democracy. These editorials devote attention to the *parivartan* (transformation) then underway. See, for instance, *Āvāj* 1: 2, 1: 4, 1: 9 and 1: 19. This need to explicate ongoing transitions was not confined to the editorials of this newspaper but was equally predominant in political speeches. It is very likely that *Āvāj*'s sensitivity to the transition of its time stemmed from sustained reference to *parivartan* in political speeches. See *Āvāj* 1: 7, 1: 9, 1: 26 for reports of political speech that are devoted to explicating the nature of *parivartan*.

form of short-lived governments, armed and unarmed protests and splintering within political parties as a natural outcome of a society that had emerged from oppression. This, it wrote on many occasions, was a natural part of the *parivartan* that was then underway. This optimism was also accompanied by calls for a better future.

This concern with the future and with change is an important evidence of the manner in which a society coming out of a particular sociopolitical setup was grappling with the fluidity that it was unaccustomed to. The Rana era was 'traditional'. The end of this era marked the beginning of 'modernity'. Retrospectively, 1951 marked the rupture between the old and the new. However, for people living through the earliest years of the 1950s, the fracture was not self-evident. Perhaps this is why one comes across almost no use of the word modern, *ādhunik*, in *Āvāj*. Nepali society was accustomed to the ordering of hierarchy that was not altered greatly in spite of political changes. Although 'traditional' values were no longer supposed to guide social order, 'modernity' was not yet lived, not yet experienced. Thus, speculations and trepidations concerning the future, concerning change, were in plenty.

In spite of his position as the leader of the largest political party, B.P. Koirala was also a member of this society that was hurtled into democracy minus its socio-structural bastions. Koirala's amorphous socialism, voiced through ambiguous words *bikās*, *unnati* and *pragati*, was in tandem with the uncertainties of the 1950s where economic, social and religious institutions were firmly entrenched in 'tradition' while the polity espoused 'modern' values.

### **3.5 Conclusion: *bikās* as concept**

This chapter has argued that the 1950s was a period of accelerated political transition from Rana autocracy to parliamentary democracy. This period marked the appearance of the word *bikās* as the Nepali translation of development. At this stage, it becomes important to answer whether *bikās* of the 1950s was or was not a concept.

*Bikās* had enlarged semantically and could accommodate a wide array of issues into its definition. This semantic extension was due to a simultaneous proliferation of the English word development in the aid discourse in the 1950s championed by the American aid program that associated it with an array of material benefits and the democratic ideals that it wished to foster in Nepal. Ambiguity is the hallmark of concepts, and the semantic richness of *bikās* had almost rendered it ambiguous by the end of the 1950s, although it was initially associated with material achievements. However, there are other criteria that are involved in the transition from a word to a concept, and *bikās* had not yet made the leap.

Unlike revolutions in the West where an 'unprecedented number of the lower strata consciously entered the speech community of those using political language' (Koselleck 2011: 11), Nepal did not witness such a democratic spread of previously aristocratic vocabulary. *Bikās* became part of the vocabulary of the upper crust that were, post 1951, able to occupy plural socioeconomic positions and identify as a member of a 'modern' political party, a 'modern' university graduate, a 'traditional' *jamindār* and a 'traditional' Hindu priest all at once. This plurality was assisted by ambiguous political concepts which allowed an individual to float from one position to the other, from tradition to modernity and vice versa. However, socioeconomic plurality was not yet possible for the vast majority of Nepalis who may have been remotely aware of a regime change in Kathmandu and whose livelihoods were untouched by political events. In other words, owing to the lag between accelerated political changes and slow socioeconomic transformations, a limited number of socioeconomic pluralities were opening up for the upper crust but the majority of the populace were still bound to hierarchy. Modern values were not the reality of this majority, neither were political concepts that enshrined these values which could blur the contradictions between tradition and modernity. Instead, it was the hierarchy that ordered their reality,

a hierarchy that hindered them from embracing political language. In the 1950s, *bikās* was limited to the political language of the upper crust, a language that was not democratized, that did not belong to everybody. Neither did *bikās*. Thus, although *bikās* was emerging in political language, it was not yet an all-round concept in the Koselleckian sense. It would take a few more decades for this to occur.

## CHAPTER IV: INVENTING A 'NATIVE' *BIKĀS*: NEPAL'S TRANSITION FROM DEMOCRACY TO 'GUIDED' DEMOCRACY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

This chapter charts the history of the concept of *bikās* during the Panchayat years. The Panchayat was keen on projecting itself as a homegrown, 'native' political system that stood in opposition to an 'imported' parliamentary democracy. It was deeply invested in conceiving and in outlining this nativity. *Bikās* was not isolated from Panchayat's search for 'inner' characters, and hence *bikās* as planned economic growth was accompanied by constructions of a 'native' *grām bikās*, or village development. The chapter is an attempt to tease out this 'native' alternative to the more popular planned development and to answer what purpose such an alternative fulfilled.

This chapter begins with a summary of the three decades of Nepal's Panchayat system. Next, it looks at select writings by Partha Chatterjee and Benjamin Zachariah on Indian nationalism as a point of departure to Pratyoush Onta's characterization of Nepal's 'inner' traits. Based on the speeches of the two monarchs that ruled during the Panchayat, a subsequent section explores the tug between an 'inner' *grām bikās* and the more popular planned development. The chapter then discusses *grām bikās* as the Panchayat's construction of a political system based on Hindu antiquity as opposed to its immediate association with the political thoughts of the Indian socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, who claimed that *grām bikās* was depoliticized and decentralized democracy. Next, it argues that Narayan's decentralized and depoliticized *grām bikās*, garbed as Hindu *grām bikās*, became the answer to the Panchayat's need for a 'native' political system that could justify the rejection of partisan politics as well as assert the state's supremacy in all matters including *bikās*. It concludes with a discussion on what the two versions of *bikās* imply in terms of Nepal's transforming political landscape.

### 4.1 Summary of the Panchayat system

The Panchayat system was launched in December 1960 by King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah after deposing the democratically elected Nepali Congress government on grounds that it was unfit for the political climate of Nepal. The king ordered the arrest of Prime Minister B.P. Koirala and his colleagues, imposed a ban on all forms of political association and assumed direct control.

This start was not without a few hiccups. Those Congress members who were able to escape imprisonment and take refuge in India launched a military campaign. Similarly, the Indian government was not pleased with the dismissal of democracy in Nepal and went to the extent of imposing an economic blockade. However, as the war between India and China broke out over border issues in 1962, Jawaharlal Nehru could not afford to displease this buffer nation and Mahendra was left to cultivate his Panchayat without much internal or external opposition.

The panchayat (village council) was extolled as an indigenous form of governance having roots in Hindu philosophical treatises. Simultaneously, Hindu values and beliefs were reiterated to bolster the centrality of the king and the institution of monarchy in the political and cultural arena. In practice, however, the ideological basis of the Panchayat was a combination of several international political features such as the National Guidance system in Egypt and Indonesia, basic democracy in Pakistan, class organization in Egypt and Yugoslavia, the Panchayat Raj of Jayaprakash Narayan in India and the Panchayat system as operative in several Indian states (Baral 2006).

'Panchayat democracy' as enshrined in the constitution of 1962 was a form of 'guided democracy' with four tiers. At the bottom was the village or town panchayat, followed progressively by the district, zonal and national panchayats. The villagers were to elect from among themselves nine members to represent them in the village panchayat. These village panchayat members would then choose from among

themselves a district representative. These district representatives from the seventy-five districts would, in turn, choose representatives into the national panchayat, or the national assembly. In addition, the national panchayat was also composed of selected members of the class organizations, namely, the peasants, the workers, the youth, the women, the elderly as well as the royal nominees. However, the national panchayat was merely an advisory body subordinate to the king.

Such a system continued with sporadic challenges until 1979, after which opposition to it gained momentum. Following a series of clashes by students demanding a referendum on the issue of multi-party system, Mahendra's successor, King Birendra, incorporated nominal amendments to the constitution. However, it was increasingly apparent that the Panchayat's grip over the people had begun to slip, with political campaigns becoming increasingly vociferous. These campaigns witnessed increasing participation of the civil society<sup>54</sup> as well as individual supporters, which ultimately culminated in the 'people's movement' for the restoration of democracy in 1989–1990 and the demise of the Panchayat system.

## 4.2 Traits that define Nepali-ness

A hasty summary of development literature emerging from the Panchayat period would claim that *bikās* was calibrated according to Western standards and entrenched within the language of development economics. This, however, is not entirely true. Rather, the Panchayat system attempted to craft *bikās* as based on traits it considered native while simultaneously associating *bikās* with planned economic growth. Such characterizations were important in providing the Panchayat with an identity that was different from the democratic system of the 1950s. In order to elaborate what the native constituted for the Panchayat system, this section will explore the inner-outer dichotomy as it has been discussed in the case of Indian nationalism by Partha Chatterjee and Benjamin Zachariah and in Nepal by Pratyoush Onta.

Partha Chatterjee uses sources from the pre-nationalistic period of colonial India to show how Indian nationalism was 'posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of the national society propagated by the modern West' (Chatterjee 1999 [1993]: 5). By 'modular' he means the standards made available to the world by European and American nationalism. Chatterjee argues that such a reading is due to trends that confine nationalism to political movements. Based on analysis of sources prior to the era of 'modular nationalism', Chatterjee writes that nationalism grew from the conflicts between the inner and the outer domains of middle-class India's sociocultural identity.

According to him, anti-colonial Indian nationalism functioned according to the inner and outer binary, with the inner representing the spiritual world and the outer concerned with the material – politics, economy and the state. While it was agreed that the West excelled in the outer domain, the inner domain of spirituality belonged to the East. And so nationalism was carved from this inner domain which was supposedly the essence of the East, untarnished by influences from the west (ibid: 6).

A similar binary is also available in Zachariah (2012[2005]). Zachariah has been discussed at length in the previous chapter. Suffice to repeat here that he, like Chatterjee, believes that in India, part of the ideological formulation of development was concerned with being modern and not Western. This East-West, inner-outer binary was particularly the concern of Gandhian thinking which, in defining development, tried to move away from excessive moral rhetoric as well as from Western modernity.

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<sup>54</sup> Although a civil society was only beginning to consolidate in the late 1980s, its composition underwent changes by nineties to include not just Nepali actors but non-Nepali institutions such as I/NGOs and their local offshoots.



Zachariah describes how, through the writings of the economist J.C. Kumarappa, Gandhian notion of development was modeled into one that was based on Indian antiquity.

Zachariah also claims that Gandhian interpretations were quite different from mainstream nationalistic interpretations of development. The latter tied development to ‘science’, ‘economic and political socialism’ and ‘national discipline’ (Zachariah 2012[2005]: 211). Although Zachariah’s mainstream nationalists appear akin to those that Chatterjee calls political agents of ‘modular nationalism’, Zachariah seems to disagree with the existence of a ‘modular nationalism’. He writes that the ‘problem’ of ‘constructing the nation’ was not merely political but one that encompassed ‘wider philosophical, social, and moral questions’ and were ‘connected to a general project of regeneration, uplift and liberation’ (ibid: 6). This implies that mainstream or modular nationalism as championed by the ‘middle class intellectuals’ was not exclusively political as Chatterjee claims but that it was equally sensitive to ‘Indian-ness’ and to an inner-outer binary just as Gandhi was.

Here the point is not to contrast Chatterjee and Zachariah but to highlight that in spite of the different views on whether or not there was a ‘modular’ form of nationalism, both scholars agree on the existence of the East-West, inner-outer dichotomy in anti-colonial and post-colonial definitions of nationalism and development respectively. It will be interesting to examine whether and to what extent such an inner-outer dichotomy was pronounced in Nepal’s engagements with development. Although an elaborate assessment of the concept of nationalism is not within the scope of this study, it is included here since works by historian Pratyoush Onta, and particularly his paper *Ambivalence Denied: The Making of Rastriya Itihas in Panchayat Era Textbooks* (1996a), discuss the connections between development and nationalism as expressed in the ‘*bār to bikās* mode’.

It has already been discussed in the previous chapter that *bikās* had strong ‘outside’ influences, particularly from the USOM. Therefore, in its genealogy *bikās* was not a native concept, although it represented native concerns. Since the Panchayat was extremely sensitive to claims of nativity and Nepali-ness, would it openly accept Western origins of *bikās* or would it attempt to construct *bikās* as native? Before an answer can be arrived at, it is necessary to understand what nativity and Nepali-ness meant in the Panchayat period. This section will study Onta’s works to understand how Nepali-ness is constructed in the writings of the period concerned. Based on this, the next section will explore whether or not the Panchayat’s notion of *bikās* carries such an imprint of Nepali-ness.

In his paper (1996a), Onta examines the creation of a *bīr* (brave) mode of historical narration. According to him, the Panchayat’s notion of nationalism was based on four elements – the Nepali language, Hinduism, monarchy and the creation of a historical narrative that rested on *bīr* pantheons the likes of warriors Prithvi Narayan Shah, Balabhadra Kunwar and Amarsingh Thapa or literary figures such as Bhanu Bhakta and Motiram Bhatta. In a second paper, Onta examines how the creation of this *bīr* narration was not entirely the Panchayat’s doing but had an earlier lineage that extended into the Rana period in the writings of the proto middle class Nepali diaspora in north India, particularly Darjeeling and Dheradun but also in Banaras and Calcutta.

This second paper (Onta 1996b) elucidates this ‘*bīr* history’. It traces the birth of a *bīr* history in the writings of expatriated Nepalis such as Surya Bikram Gyawali, Parasmani Pradhan and Dharanidhar Koirala in the 1930s and 1940s. These men were at the helm of carving a ‘Nepali history in the *bīr* mode by constructing and disseminating the pantheon of brave warriors from the ‘unification era’ (1740s to 1816) – from Prithvi Narayan Shah to Balbhadra – as independent Nepal’s national history’ (Onta 1996b: 39). Onta writes that along with a standardized Nepali language, such a *bīr* history became the fundamental force around which ‘improvement’ of the Nepali *jāti* was centered.

Onta's characterization of the historical narrative of the Panchayat era as that from '*bīr* to *bikās*' claims that 'the cultural terrain of the nation as described by the *bīr* history provides individual characteristic to the land on which development agendas – mostly imported from elsewhere – were implemented' (Onta 1996a: 222). Elaborating this *bīr* to *bikās* narrative further he writes,

*Bīr* history provided the bearings of an independent land on which *bikās* projects could be enacted. With foreign money and models pouring into Nepal in the name of development, it was *bīr* history that made the country's *bikās* 'Nepali'. It is for this reason that even as the state acknowledged its relative poverty in economic terms as exemplified by several statistical indicators, the independent nation with a glorious *bīr* past could assert its membership in the world community of nations. It is for this reason that a sense of self – marginality in a world graded by economic development can simultaneously co-exist with a strong pride in the Nepali nation.... (ibid: 232)

Onta admits that his work focuses on the beginnings of the *bīr* narrative, and not on the *bikās* ends. Thus, although the paper claims that the Panchayat system used a historical narrative of bravery of the Nepali people to justify the post Rana *bikās* narrative, he does not go further. I agree with Onta on the existence of two separate narratives, *bīr* followed by *bikās*. What is intended in the next section is to explore if and how the *bīr* model was connected to the *bikās* model since, in Onta's work, the connections are not explored but only claimed to exist.

A third paper by Onta (1997) looks at the creation of a *bīr* historical narrative in the Rana era by examining the life and works of the Rana poet, dramatist and one of the early members of the standardization of Nepali literature, Balkrishna Sama. According to Onta, Sama's works were driven by his search for a 'pure' Nepali culture free from the tarnishes of Urdu and Hindi. Onta states that the poet had grown in a large Rana household that reveled in plays and entertainment, mainly in non-Nepali languages that were far removed from the cultural and social milieu of Nepal. For example, Onta quotes Sama's reaction to a play performed by the Imperial Opera House of India on the celebration of King Tribhuvan's wedding as a play 'full of glitter, beautiful women and lust' but 'located far from Nepal and Nepali, from our language and culture' (quoted in Onta 1997: 11). Dejected by such blemishes, Onta writes that Sama made it his mission to contribute to a 'pure' Nepali literary culture.

Although Onta himself does not deploy Partha Chatterjee's inner-outer binary but describes his paper as a way of understanding 'how the Nepali language and nationalized history of Nepal written in the Nepali language came to exercise the power of *cultural attachment* over specific Nepalis during the twentieth century' (ibid: 69), his narration of Balkrishna Sama's representation of a 'pure' Nepal versus the impure colonial Calcutta comes very close to Chatterjee's binary.<sup>55</sup> According to Onta's assessment of a certain play written by Sama, the latter defined 'pure' Nepal in terms of the country's status as a Hindu kingdom untarnished by foreign rule, as the birthplace of *bīr* soldiers and as a place that was morally free from the cultural vice prevalent in Calcutta (ibid: 89). Similarly, Onta's second paper (1996b) discussed above looks at the creation of a *bīr* history of Nepal among the proto middle-class Nepali diasporas in north India for whom a non-colonized independent and therefore brave Nepali *jāti* was what defined Nepali-ness and differentiated Nepal from British India. In Onta's works we see how Rana-era Nepal was concerned with constructing a *jāti* identity based on certain 'inner' traits. However,

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<sup>55</sup> In fact, referring to Sarkar's critique of Chatterjee, Onta (1997) writes that nationalism in Nepal is much more than a 'derivative discourse' of colonialism and that 'history of Nepali nationalism should be thought of as being both influenced by the colonial presence in South Asia and also one that was socially constructed in conscious opposition to it in ways that we could, decisively call, "Nepali"' (ibid: 97). Onta's critique is based on Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought in a Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (1999[1986]) and not on Chatterjee's *The Nation and its Fragments* (1995[1993]), from which I have discussed the inner-outer binary.

unlike Chatterjee and Zachariah, who assign spirituality as India's 'inner' domain, Onta's works reveal that it was not spirituality or religion but bravery that constituted the 'inner' domain in Nepal. Based on Onta's work, it may be claimed that Nepali nationalism was constructed in the 1930s and 1940s out of an inner-outer binary based on the narrative of bravery and political independence and was appropriated by the Panchayat in the three decades.

What then of *bikās*? Was a similar inner-outer binary part of the construction of the Panchayat-era *bikās* narrative? The answer will be searched for in the speeches of the two kings that ruled in the Panchayat period.

### 4.3 The two kings and *bikās*<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.3.1 Village development versus economic development: King Mahendra's speeches

Today it has become his epithet that King Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah (1920–1972) was keen to project the Panchayat as a truly homegrown form of governance 'suitable to the soil' and that he avidly criticized 'Western' type parliamentary democracy. While Mahendra succeeded in portraying the 'Panchayat democracy' as an opposite of the Western model, this section will explore the two volumes of *Proclamations, Speeches and Messages*, a compilation of King Mahendra's speeches from 1951 to 1960 and from 1960 to 1965, to answer if and how he attempted to carve a native form of development.

The two volumes contain a total of four hundred and sixty-eight speeches. The first volume belongs to the pre-Panchayat period while the second volume pertains to the five years immediately after the promulgation of the Panchayat. They provide a comparison of Mahendra's political programs as prince and later king of a democratic nation and, post 1960, as the executive head of a party-less Panchayat. This section does not examine all four hundred and plus speeches. Excluding inaugural speeches pertaining to health, education or infrastructure (as these are brief, congratulatory messages that are ritualistic and devoid of social, economic or political references), condolence speeches as well as speeches to platoons, this section looks at sixty-six speeches delivered at religious, economic and political occasions and at international conventions and some of his early foreign visits. The aim is to explore early signs of an inner-outer dichotomy and its basis either on *bīr* history or any other trait.

Most of King Mahendra's early speeches pay greater attention to democracy and nationalist sentiments than to development. They reveal that Mahendra was impressed by the democracies of the West. Before he promulgated the Panchayat system, King Mahendra praised the democracies of the United States and the United Kingdom. Between 1958 and 1960 Mahendra also visited the USSR, Ceylon and Japan. His speeches during these visits recount Nepal's journey to democracy, Nepal's status as a small but sovereign nation and its commitment to non-alignment. They do not dwell on Nepal's Hindu status nor hint at Mahendra's ambitions for a native form of 'Panchayat democracy'. His speech in London refers to the British constitution and the parliament as an 'inspiration' and a 'model' for Nepal and welcomes the aid received from Britain (*Speech at a state banquet held by queen Elizabeth II in honor of the Nepali monarch*, October 17, 1960). In Washington, Mahendra praises the 'philanthropic attitude' of the United States 'to do good to their less fortunate sisters in times of their own prosperity' along with asserting his belief in democratic principles characteristic of the United States (*Address to the joint meeting of the American Senate and Congress*, April 28, 1960). In a separate address to the National Press Club in Washington, Mahendra recalls the poverty, illiteracy and the various ills of Nepal, bemoaning the lack of anything equivalent to a Renaissance. He decries Nepal's age-old social and

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<sup>56</sup> This chapter does not dismiss the kings' speeches as propaganda. Rather, it takes these speeches as representative of Panchayat's adaptation of *bikās* since the Panchayat was actively directed by the two monarchs.

religious practices that ‘do not conform to the norms and standards of modern democracy’ (ibid). These speeches were given eight months prior to his dismissal of the elected government in Nepal on grounds that parliamentary democracy was foreign and unsuitable. Addressing the nation after his return from these visits, Mahendra lauded science and technology of the developed countries, although he added that the aim for science and technology should not ‘jeopardize our culture and traditional heritage’ (*Address to the nation on returning home from state visit to Japan and USA*, July 28, 1960).

When development receives mention, it is consistently associated with planning in infrastructure, public health, forest resources, drinking water, land reform, transport and communication, cottage industries, etc., and to passing mention of the assistance received from foreign countries (*Address to the second session of the advisory assembly*, November 17, 1954, *Announcement of the first Five-year plan*, October 8, 1955, *National Democracy Day message*, February 19, 1956, *Message to the nation*, February 1, 1958, *Speech at the development exhibition in Thimi*, April 13, 1957, *Address at the inauguration of the Mahendra Spinning Wheel*, February 18, 1958). In fact, the opening sentence of Stiller and Yadav’s chapter on the growth of planning in Nepal states that ‘King Mahendra made the word “planning” part of Nepal’s national vocabulary’ (Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979]: 159).

Planning becomes pronounced with Mahendra’s assumption of power and the inauguration of the Panchayat system. In outlining the program of the new system in January 1961, Mahendra touches upon all the standard elements of *bikās* such as education, an efficient administration and equally efficient utilization of resources, planned development, industrialization and land reforms (*Message outlining the policy and program of the government and announcing the panchayat system as a substitute for the parliamentary system of democracy*, January 5, 1961). Reference to planned development is also present in his *National Day message* (February 18, 1961). On numerous occasions, Mahendra refers to the need to accelerate the pace of development, through planning, and to accomplish within two decades what the West achieved in two centuries. This reference to acceleration has been noted in earlier writings of various political actors and Mahendra was not new to the trend of envisioning development planning as ‘catching up’ or as a leap towards ‘modernity’.

However, with the launch of the Panchayat, a hazy alternative to economic growth begins to manifest in Mahendra’s speeches. This alternative appears in the form of village development. Although the Village Development Program had been operating since 1952, it was one of the tributaries of *bikās*. It was only under the Panchayat that village development or *grām bikās* and decentralization receive center stage. It was through decentralization that the Panchayat attempted to crystallize a version of *bikās* that was native. In Mahendra’s speech at the block development officer’s conference in Pokhara on April 10, 1961, he briefly mentions the need for a ‘plan suitable to our country’ and one that is not an ‘imitation’ nor one that is ‘imposed from above’. Subsequent speeches such as the *New Year’s Day message* on April 13, 1961, the *Message on the first anniversary of the royal takeover* on December 15, 1961, or the *Inaugural address at the conference of intellectuals* on June 5, 1962, emphasizes the need for national development that is homegrown and anchored to the ‘divine’. Some examples are as follows,

For us the vital question is the question of national development not the question of the superiority or inferiority of any ‘isms’ or ideology based on pure theories. We have to solve our problems in our own way and accomplish the development of our country. We are all fed up with the devastations wrought in our national life by blindly copied ‘isms’. (*New Year’s Day message* on April 13, 1961)

Our country with its numerous hills and mountains and streams and rivers has developed its culture and civilization within the framework of the Panchayat system.... The pancha has acquired high honor and dignity under the popular appellation of Pancha Parmeshwor or Lord Pancha. The time

demand that the Nepalese people once more adopt and implement the Panchayat system because only a democracy growing naturally out of this system can be understood by the Nepalese people. (*Speech to the panchas elected from Kathmandu* on April 13, 1962)

Similarly, a speech at the Hindu cultural rally in Nagpur, India, on January 14, 1965, contains some Hindu elements. According to Mahendra,

Independence and prosperity are essential for the protection of religion. With this in mind, Nepal has been striving successfully for the material well-being and prosperity of her citizens. But the ultimate objective is always the practice of religion. To-day, Dharma and Righteousness is the only key to the salvation of mankind. This is why Nepal has adopted the Panchayat System based on Hindu traditions and policy. Its principal aim is the spiritual development of the individual, which is the only way to the realization of the basic values of life. ...the system wants to put everybody on the path of Dharma by developing in him an awareness of his duties, responsibilities and rights. It is for this reason also that momentous programmes like Land Reforms are being implemented in Nepal with a view to vitalizing and awakening the overwhelming majority of rightful peasants in the country.

Here Mahendra proclaims religion to be the guiding light of the Panchayat and the Panchayat to be a medium through which people can 'awaken' to righteousness and *dharmā*. It can be conjectured that it was the occasion that prompted him to elaborate upon the Panchayat's Hindu connections, since such corollaries are not frequently or frivolously scattered throughout the four hundred and sixty-eight speeches in these volumes. The occasional reference to Hinduism is perhaps because the task of extrapolating these corollaries was delegated to his ministries and Panchayat literature and hence the king considered it unnecessary to revisit them frequently.

Among his speeches on various religious, political, economic occasions and at various international events, there is only one instance when Mahendra deploys an East-West dichotomy as a civilizational distinction. This is a speech in Yugoslavia in 1961. At the conference of the non-allied nations, Mahendra distinguishes between the extrovert European and the introvert Asian civilizations. While blaming the 'excessively extrovert character' of Europe acquired following its progress in science and technology as the causes for the calamity of colonialism, he also refers to the 'natural', 'contemplative' trait of Asian civilizations which, according to him, was reinforced when it came in contact with Europe. Among his many national and international speeches, this is an exception where Mahendra distinguishes Nepal in terms of qualities he described as 'deep rooted in her spiritual and religious tradition' (*Speech at the conference of the heads of states and government of non-aligned countries*, September 2, 1961). However, his speech at the second summit of the nonaligned countries is devoid of the East-West dichotomy. It is not correct to claim that Mahendra subscribed to an inner-outer dichotomy similar to Gandhi based on one particular speech. However, since Mahendra's Gandhian inspirations are vivid in his attempts to promote the 'Mahendra spinning wheel' as part of the revival of cottage industries in Nepal as well, there certainly were some borrowings from across the border.<sup>57</sup>

More importantly, underneath Mahendra's rhetoric of a village development that is 'suitable' to the 'soil and climate' of Nepal, the 'Hindu' Panchayat's *bikās* depended heavily on close cooperation with 'friends' providing foreign assistance, and so *bikās* was, in practice, a continuation of the priorities

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<sup>57</sup> Although most of Mahendra's speeches insist on the Nepali-ness of the Panchayat, his speech to the elected *panchas* in Kathmandu on April 13, 1962, discreetly discloses Indian influences. He states, 'The Panchayat system now budding forth in our country bears the seal and signature of the Nepalese race but it does not contain anything alien to the genius of the Indian race'.

defined in the earlier political period and with the emphasis on planned economic growth intact. His message on the implementation of the Three-year Plan on September 27, 1962, states,

From the experience and experiments of the progressive countries we learn that reliable progress in the economic and other fields can be achieved by working in accordance with a plan prepared after due thought. With this knowledge in view the Five Year Plan was drawn up and executed...Taking advantage of past experience, the Three Year Plan has, therefore, been drafted for the all-side development and prosperity of our country on the basis of detailed assessment of capital and resources to the maximum extent possible.

His address to the first session of the Rastriya Panchayat on April 18, 1963, contains similar emphasis on the importance of ‘a balanced plan based on realities in order to foster an all-round development of the country’. The speech also outlines the government’s development priorities, which are not very different from earlier speeches by non-Panchayat governments of the 1950s since development is pegged to better taxation, promotion of trade and commerce, facilitating export, transportation and communication, etc. Continuing with past practices, he mentions the need to balance agriculture with trade and to promote small- and medium-scale industries. A similar address to the fourth session of the Rastriya Panchayat on June 29, 1964, reiterates the importance of planned economic development. Outlining the achievements of the past three years, this speech refers to the steps taken to end the then prevalent dual currency system, the measures taken to become less dependent on foreign aid by mobilizing internal resources mostly through taxation, through the recently floated Development Bond, through more accurate record keeping of government revenue and through austerity measures.

Hence, although village development was central to the Panchayat’s rhetoric of a *bikās* that was ‘Nepali’, Mahendra’s speeches reveal that in practice development meant planned economic growth and that it contained little of the native alternative. When asked how he defined the political philosophy of the Panchayat, Mahendra had replied,

It is very difficult to develop our economy from above as our country is not industrialized. We must develop it from the roots. We do not think it right to transplant Socialist or Capitalist economic system into our country. We have adopted a sort of mixed economy, we can assimilate the good features of other economies in conformity with the conditions of our country, but its main objective is to raise the standard of living of all our people. (King Mahendra’s interview in Nepāl Bhāṣā Patrika in HMG/Nepal, 1967, vol. II: 317)

Such a ‘mixed economy’ arising ‘from the roots’ is a reference to decentralized *grām bikās*. How decentralization would contribute to the ‘the spiritual development’ of the individual is not elaborated in this speech or other speeches. To conclude, Mahendra does not coherently elaborate the Panchayat philosophy but alternates between planned, foreign-aided development and village development based on Hindu ethos in an obscure and unmethodical fashion. While the proto middle class of the 1940s defined Nepali-ness on *bīr* qualities, many years later the monarch chose to base it on religion. However, King Mahendra’s speeches reveal that he did not pursue a local version of development based on ‘inner’ traits extensively, and when he did, they were largely rhetorical and inconsistent. This is so because in Nepal, the inner-outer binary was an alternative to the dominant definitions of *bikās* as economic planning. Hence, the attempts by the monarch to weave an ‘inner’ Nepali *bikās* based on Hinduism appear to stand out oddly against popular connotations of a calibrated, quantifiable and planned development.

#### **4.3.2 Village development versus economic development: King Birendra’s speeches**

This section is based on two volumes of King Birendra’s *Proclamations, speeches and messages*, from 1972 to 1982 and from 1982–1987, which contains a total of three hundred and sixty-seven speeches. Excluding inaugural speeches pertaining to health, education, infrastructure and congratulatory

messages (since these, like Mahendra's, were ritualistic and devoid of social, economic or political references), this section looks at eighty-eight speeches delivered at religious, economic and political occasions and at international conventions.

The Panchayat was well consolidated by the time King Birendra Bir Bikram Shah (1945–2001) ascended the throne. He provided a continuum to the system until its demise in 1990. Without diverging from the core of the Panchayat philosophy, Birendra projected Nepal as the only sovereign Hindu kingdom, strongly committed to the principles of non-alignment and reiterated Mahendra's dictum that the Panchayat was most appropriate for the country's development. He was also able to maintain a steady flow of foreign aid from diverse nations and, akin to his predecessor, continued to extol its role in contributing to *bikās*.

He also shared his father's enthusiasm for planned economic growth. Like Mahendra, Birendra's idea of economic growth comprised of industries, roads, agriculture, land reform, irrigation, schools and hospitals. His speeches at the yearly sessions of the Rastriya Panchayat between 1972 and 1987 are a balance sheet of the yearly targets and achievements in planned economic development. The following is one example of how development is described. According to Birendra,

Having fallen behind times in economic development, we, in Nepal wish to build roads, construct bridges, set up industries and utilize our abundant water resources for power, irrigation, waterways and a host of other things. We intend to establish hospitals, build schools, found academies, create parks, carve out stadia, beautify cities and renovate temples. We wish to plant trees, preserve our forests and, above all, develop agriculture together with industries in such a way that we would be able to provide for our people the basic needs of life - food, clothes, shelter, education and health. (*Speech at the seventh conference of the non-aligned nations*, March 1983)

Together with these, new concerns such as family planning, planned urbanization, water supply and waste management, tourism and forest conservation received a fillip during Birendra's regime. Birendra's economic development attempted to strike a balance between agriculture and industry but to little avail. While his 'integrated approach' of land reform, soil conservation, irrigation, distribution of fertilizers, seeds, insecticides and better access to agricultural loans facilitated through cooperatives were part of 'agricultural development', he was less explicit when it came to 'industrial development'. Apart from the rhetoric of industrialization ushering a new era (*Annual address to the Rastriya Panchayat*, *Address to the solidarity ministerial meeting*, November 30, 1982, *Message to the mid-term global review meet on sustainable program for the least developed countries*, September 30, 1985), Birendra's regime lacked definite achievements in industrial development. His speech at the solidarity ministerial meeting in 1982 attempts to chart out an industrial plan that focuses on the five basics, viz., food, clothing, shelter, health and education, through industries such as food processing, textile, shoes, pharmaceuticals, construction and education materials that will 'fulfill our basic needs'. Although industrial development never concretely 'took off' in Nepal, this conjoining with basic needs reflects Nepal's greater engagements with the international community in courting them for aid as well as in pledging conformity with international priorities.

The frequency and fluency with which West-inspired development jargons began appearing in Birendra's speeches complemented by Nepal's open-armed adoption of the development tiers reveal that by the 1980s Nepal was seeped into Western 'models' of development. In reference to Nepal, phrases such as 'under developed', 'least developed' (*alpa-bikāsīt*), 'developing' (*bikās un mukh*) and 'late comer' in the arena of economic growth are ample in Birendra's speeches at international events, as are his calls for 'integrated approach', for 'south-south cooperation' as well as laudatory references

to various declarations, mandates and charters of the United Nations.<sup>58</sup> Thus, it was during the two decades of Birendra's regime that *bikās* in its Western avatar was unhesitatingly accepted and whatever lip service Mahendra had paid to a native form of *bikās* disappears.

While *grām bikās* was the alternative to planned economic growth in Mahendra's speeches, Birendra's references to village development or *grām bikās* are inconspicuous. As examples, his yearly speeches to the *rastriya panchayat* or his annual directives to the meeting of the national development council refer to the need for agriculture development, promotion of small and medium industries, to the utilization of local raw materials as well as to *bikās* that emerges from the village upwards. These, however, are not associated with the appellations of *grām bikās* in spite of Birendra assiduously championing the 'Back To The Village Campaign'. In fact, his speeches to the Rastriya Panchayat and the national development council are evidences of the disappearance of *grām bikās*. Instead, in Birendra's speeches a shift towards regional development – *kendriya bikās* or *prādeśik bikās* – is visible. The division of the country initially into four and later to five 'development regions' along a north-south axis was an outcome of this shift from village development to regional development (*Message on the implementation of the Fifth Plan*, September 1, 1976). However, unlike his father, Birendra makes no attempt to project regional development as a native version of development. Rather, regional development was associated with planning and growth and was articulated as such in the fourth plan of 1970–1975.

With growth achievements that were considerably below target, a critique to the top-down method of planning had begun to emerge since the conclusion of the third plan (1965–1970). As a result, 'regional development' was introduced in the Fourth Plan as a move away from the Kathmandu and Tarai-centric planning. According to Stiller and Yadav, 'the regional development concept drew strong support from international economists who were openly dissatisfied with economic development models that were clearly not working' (Stiller and Yadav 1993[1979]: 250). The evolution of development 'models' in the West that departed from the earlier enthusiasm for economic growth and instead rallied for a people-centric approach had made its way into Nepal by mid-1970s. As a result, King Birendra's regime witnessed the birth of development models such as Small Area Development Program, Integrated Development and the Basic Needs Approach, along with phrases such as grassroots planning, the rural poor and bottom-up planning.

However, what was unique to Birendra was his campaign for Nepal as the Zone of Peace at various national and international platforms in the early eighties. Through his Zone of Peace campaign, he vociferously tried to carve peace as the 'inner' core of Nepal. At every conference of the nonaligned nations, Birendra named Nepal the 'Zone of Peace' and proposed that such zones be established elsewhere as well. According to him,

In Nepal, we have lived a life of seclusion and peace through the ages. Among the mountains, in the river banks or under the groves of trees close by a forest, our sages and seers have taught us to seek peace. Over two thousand and five hundred years ago, it was from Nepal that prince Siddhartha Gautam, who later became known as Buddha, set out looking for ways to peace and ultimate deliverance for man...It was along this road that we proposed Nepal is to be declared a Zone of Peace. (*Speech at the seventh conference of the non-aligned nations*, March 9, 1983)

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<sup>58</sup> His speeches at or messages to the conference of non-aligned nations, the conference of heads of states or governments of the South Asian countries, the SAARC summit and the mid-term review meet on the progress towards the implementation of the substantial new program of action for the least developed countries for the 1980s all held between 1982 and 1987 are some examples.



That Birendra, a Hindu monarch, chooses the Buddha as an icon to represent Nepal at an international platform is not surprising given the symbiosis between the two religions in Nepal. What is interesting is the need felt by a king known for his modern, liberal sensibilities to continue to distinguish Nepal according to ‘inner’ qualities. However, the ‘inner’ traits are not prominent in Birendra’s characterization of *bikās*.

Thus, while an inner-outer binary (based either on bravery as Onta’s works portray or on religion as the speeches discussed above claim) is essential in defining Nepali nationhood, it does not color the definitions of *bikās*. In the sources studied thus far, *bikās* is only tentatively differentiated according to an inner-outer binary based on religion, and not on Nepal’s *bīr* history. Additionally, *bikās* as modernization or the possibility of ‘catching up’ through planned economic growth continues to be dominant. This is because, aside from the rhetoric of a native *bikās*, Nepal’s development was an interventionist, foreign-aided development. This is evident from the volume of foreign aid Nepal received. From the first grant amount of merely US\$ 2,000 to US\$ 131.28 million by 1980–1981, of which the loan component was steadily outcompeting the grant, Nepal’s development was increasingly donor driven (Dixit 1997; Sharma 2009[2003]). The ability of such foreign-aided development to depoliticize and to reduce development to a technical problem requiring technical solutions (Ferguson 1994) is what made planned development persist in spite of attempts to craft a native alternative. Since *bikās* as planned economic growth is about numbers and statistics which are neither Western nor Eastern, neither ‘inner’ nor ‘outer’, it was possible for an economic *bikās* to coexist with and adjunct a ‘native’ political system. Thus, on the one hand, King Mahendra and the Panchayat ideologues could shape development as *grām bikās*, while King Birendra could recite, quote and refer to *bikās* in all its Western jargons since both Mahendra and Birendra were ultimately referring to the same thing – the technical and non-political imagery of economic prosperity.

#### 4.4 Between invention and reality: Panchayat’s *grām bikās*

In spite of the dominance of development as planned economic growth in both Mahendra’s and Birendra’s speeches, an ‘inner’ decentralized *grām bikās* was the Panchayat’s alternative definition of *bikās*.<sup>59</sup> This alternative has remained unexplored in studies on the Panchayat era. Hence, the subsequent sections will focus on *grām bikās*. It will argue that in spite of the Panchayat’s claims that *grām bikās* was ‘inner’ or native and originating from Hindu traditions, in reality, *grām bikās* arose from the Panchayat need for a depoliticized, devolved ‘democracy’ to counter an ‘imported’ parliamentary democracy.

Written sources from the early Panchayat years evade continuities between development projects of the 1950s and its version of *grām bikās*. Rather, these sources persistently associate *grām bikās* with ancient Hindu traditions. For instance, an essay describing the genealogy of the word Panchayat traces its origin to scriptures such as the Manusmṛiti and the Sukraniti (Aryal 1963: 41–56). It claims that the ancient practice of village assemblies comprising five erudite members, or *pancas*, who took upon themselves the responsibility of dispensing justice and maintaining harmony within the village, was a form of local governance since the reign of Lord Ram. Such references to the Panchayat’s Hindu origins are also

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<sup>59</sup> This alternative to economic development is found in Panchayat literature such as *Twenty-Five Years of the Panchayat System in Nepal, Achievements and Possibilities*, 1961–1986 (1986); *Pañcāyat Vyākhyā ra Viśleṣaṇ*, (1963), *Pañcāyat Viśleṣaṇ* (1971), *Pañcāyat ek Adhyayan* (1979) and *Pañcāyat Praśṇottar* (1982), all published by the Pracār Prasār Vibhāḡ, the publication division of the Panchayat.

emphasized in school curriculum such as *Pañcāyat Paricay*, whose many series were mandatory reading and in certain speeches by King Mahendra as discussed above.

A similar reversion to antiquity is also visible in the magazine *Vikās* published a few months after King Mahendra's takeover.<sup>60</sup> One essay on *grām bikās* projects its history to antiquity in consonance with the new narration linking Panchayat with Hindu tradition (*Vikās* 2: 11). Such a reversion to Hinduism is not typical to the Panchayat period alone. It has been wielded deftly by previous regimes and rulers as well. Two prominent examples are Prithvi Narayan Shah, who famously pronounced Nepal as the '*asal hindustān*', the only untarnished land of Hinduism that remained after the Mughal conquest of India, and, almost a century later, Jang Bahadur Rana, who declared Nepal the 'only Hindu state' where 'in this Kali Yuga, a Hindu ruler rules' (Burghart 1996, quoted in S. Sharma 2004: 452). S. Sharma (2004) argues that such an emphasis on Hinduism provided Nepali rulers a distinct identity vis-à-vis the previous rulers and India. The Panchayat was therefore following a long established precedence where, as an 'inner' trait, Hinduism provided the Panchayat with an identity that was different from the democratic system of the 1950s.

However, the preceding issue of the same magazine *Vikās* had also published an essay on *grām bikās* when the newly elected Nepali Congress government was consolidating itself in 1959. This preceding essay does not associate *grām bikās* with antiquity. Written during the heydays of parliamentary democracy, it recounts the efforts of the Nepali Congress government in setting up village panchayats aimed at decentralization, *grām bikās* and *jillā bikās* (district development) (*Vikās* 2: 10). It provides numerical details of the Panchayat offices that had been established, of the trainings received and the curriculum taught at these trainings. It does not link *grām bikās* to Hindu antiquity, since this 1959 article was a report of the then ongoing 'project' on village development conducted through the USOM and Indian assistance and aimed to train four thousand *grām sevaks* (village development workers) over five years who were to lead the Village Development Centers established in 1958 in ten locations across the country (Skerry et al. 1991: 40). Thus, in reverting to Hinduism, Panchayat literature appears to deliberately obliterate and evade the early history of *grām bikās*.

The fact that the panchayat's *grām bikās* had antecedence in the 1950s rather than in Hindu philosophy is also evinced by revelations from Panchayat ideologues who admit that the system was partly inspired by Indian socialist thought. According to Bishwab Bahdhu Thapa, who had begun his political career as a member of B.P. Koirala's Nepali Congress but decided to serve as the king's minister,<sup>61</sup> the Panchayat system was inspired by a certain book written by the Indian socialist leader and freedom fighter Jayaprakash Narayan. He and his colleague Tulsi Giri had encountered and had been riveted by J.P.'s ideas on panchayat and *grām bikās* during their academic years in Banaras. Although the octogenarian fails to recall the exact name of this book, he does recall that B.P. Koirala had received a copy of it during his active years in politics in the 1950s. Thapa also mentions that the word panchayat chimed with familiarity, was relatable and therefore he and his colleagues decided to call the new form of governance by this name.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> In the Hindu context, antiquity stretches back to the creation of Manu, the progenitor of the human species who, like the Biblical Noah, was rescued from a great flood by god in the form of a fish. According to religious texts called the Puranas, Manusmriti is an ancient text detailing Hindu laws, codes, conducts, duties and virtues that was preached by Manu. It is this Manusmriti and one other religious text – the Sukraniti – that the Panchayat sources often hark back to as the antiquated origins of the Panchayat system.

<sup>61</sup> However, many decades later, he continues to refer to B.P. as his political guru (Sijapati 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Personal communications with Bishwabandhu Thapa.

The extracts cited below are from Jayaprakash Narayan's *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj* (1970). With minor changes, these extracts could be inserted into the books published by Nepal's Panchayat where they would accommodate seamlessly. Narayan writes,

In order that the people might participate in government, government must be brought as near to the people as possible. This would require a thorough-going system of political as well as economic decentralization. (Narayan 1970: 72)

Unfortunately, it is the view in some quarters that unless there is electoral contest, there is no democracy. It is this static, abstract, wooden view that comes in the way of finding a solution. (ibid: 83)

The purpose of citing these extracts is to demonstrate that tiered, bottom-up decentralization was a lively topic in India at about the same period as it was implemented in Nepal. There are repeated assertions of 'bringing government to the people', of the adult population of a village comprising a statutory body and of the 'superfluous' nature of elections of 'Western democracy' in Nepali sources, as there are in Narayan's works. Although Narayan proposed a three-tiered system while Nepal's Panchayat was organized around four tiers, both were emphatic about the reinforcing ties between decentralization and development. Similarly, both claimed that parliamentary elections were disruptive to village harmony, although the Nepali proponents adhered to claims that village panchayats were based on adult suffrage and were therefore democratic.<sup>63</sup> Narayan's *Swaraj for the People* was written about the same time that the Panchayat was launched in Nepal. However, Narayan had been propagating his views much before the 1960s. In terms of precedence, it is Jayaprakash Narayan, and not the Nepali Panchayat system, that leads the way.

Among Jayaprakash Narayan's prominent writings before 1960 are *Why Socialism* (1936), *Three Basic Problems in India: From Socialism to Sarvodaya* (1957), and *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959). His book *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj* appeared only in 1970. Thapa and his colleague could have been influenced by any of these, and although the exact book referred to by the ideologue has been lost in the web of memory, Thapa's acknowledgement that he and his contemporaries had been imbibing from the currents of Indian socialist thinking is important, although he asserts that in spite of these Indian socialist afflictions, the Nepali Panchayat was unique to the historical circumstances of Nepal. The following section will explore the political thoughts of Narayan in order to trace the extent of its influence on Nepal's Panchayat and its conception of *grām bikās*.

#### **4.5 Panchayat Raj as the confluence of parliamentary democracy and 'communitarian' society**

This section is based on the book *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj* (1970), a compilation of articles written by Jayaprakash Narayan from 1947 to 1961. Predating the articles compiled in this book were other works, *An Outline Picture of Swaraj* (1940), *My Picture of Socialism* (1946), *A Plea for the Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959), which are not included in this collection. Regardless of these exclusions, this 1970 compilation contains Narayan's expositions on *grām pañcāyat*, 'community development' and 'participatory democracy' written during and after Indian independence. The book helps to understand Narayan's ideological transitions from Marxism to 'Communitarianism' and the ferments within the early Indian socialists, of which Narayan was a core member. Since Nepal's

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<sup>63</sup> It must be mentioned that since the publication division was set up with the intention of disseminating Panchayat's concerns for national unity and cultural harmony, most publications stress the links between the Panchayat, nationalism and democracy to the extent that a first glance gives the impression that the Panchayat is obsessively concerned with these than with explicating its overall vision for *bikās*. Nevertheless, a more detailed attention will reveal that *bikās* was woven into the rhetoric of nationalism and democracy.

political arena assimilated significantly from Indian political ideologies, it is worthwhile studying Narayan's political thoughts as well as comparing it with Panchayat ideology in Nepal.

Jayaprakash Narayan was concerned with the 'remaking of man' (Narayan 1970: 25), which he believed was possible through the Panchayat Raj, which was based on the interconnections between the individual and the community. For Narayan, among the many interconnected communities within which an individual moves, it was the 'primary community' that was most important. This 'primary community' is where the individual is socialized and which is

built up of personal relationships, and choice and free will have their play within the limits of self-imposed discipline and common culture. In the community there is participation by the members in all communal affairs. The community is a cooperative society in that the community encompasses the whole of life, rather than only its economic sector, and all the members of the community, rather than only those who purchase shares. (ibid: 43)

This definition refers to words such as 'choice', 'free will', 'participatory' and 'cooperative' in order to emphasize that the 'primary community' was not state control but based on 'democratic decentralization' (ibid: 36).

The links between 'community' and democracy are not confined to Narayan alone but are also present in the early writings on 'community development' in Nepal. Fujikura (2013) looks at how the USOM conceptualized 'community development' in Nepal in the 1950s. Going back to the archives, Fujikura traces a 162-page length document titled 'What is Community Development' by Paul Rose, the first American director at the USOM in Nepal. This document is a compilation of definitions of community development. It discusses definitions from various 'experts' and concludes with an 'interim definition'. According to Rose, community development is a 'joint effort to solve, democratically and scientifically, common problems on a community basis' (Fujikura 2013: 121).

Both Jayaprakash Narayan and Paul Rose believed in the interconnections between development and democracy. Similarly, both men were village centric in approach. Nevertheless, what Jayaprakash Narayan refers to as 'democratic decentralization' is not quite the same as the above definition of community development by Rose. Narayan believed that economic decentralization and political decentralization were parallel processes. Further, Narayan was not encumbered by communist 'threats'. Paul Rose, on the other hand, believed that economic development was necessary for a stable democracy that was not prone to communism. Community development that was practiced in Nepal since the 1950s was not as much about devolution of politics and economics as it was about economic growth as a counter to communism.

Both Paul Rose and Jayaprakash Narayan have strong imprints on what constitutes village development in Nepal. Rose's involvements were more direct and have been studied to certain extents.<sup>64</sup> Narayan, on the other hand, is only acknowledged occasionally.<sup>65</sup> Therefore, this section will elaborate Narayan's version of *grām pancāyat* as the summation of economic and political decentralization, while the next section will discuss parallels between Narayan's ideas and the Panchayat system of Nepal.

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<sup>64</sup> Mihaly (2009[1996]); Skerry et al. (1991) and Fujikura (2013) to name a few.

<sup>65</sup> To give one example, a letter written by the Nepal Praja Parishad leader Tanka Prasad Acharya to Jayaprakash Narayan complaining about the 'wayward' tendencies of the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala and his request that Koirala be counselled is an example of the big brother syndrome Nepali politicians displayed towards Indian leaders, including Narayan. This letter reveals the influence of Indian leaders such as Narayan not only on the ideological but the personal and political spheres of Nepali political life (Gautam R. 2005[1986], vol. I, annex 31).

According to Brahmananda, the editor of *Communitarian Society and Panchayati Raj*, Narayan's 'communitarianism' was the result of his disenchantments with Marxism following its 'degradation' by Lenin. Although Narayan was not initially captivated by Gandhian teachings, he drifted away from Marxism and towards a greater regard for Gandhi's moral positions. For Narayan, the central problem was the disparity between man's mastery over nature without corresponding 'progress' in the self, a problem that Marxism and parliamentary democracy failed to address. Hence his quest for a balance between the material and the moral found a place in Panchayat Raj, initially championed by Mahatma Gandhi.

Jayaprakash Narayan refers to *grām rāj* and village panchayat as the vehicles of decentralization. His early writings speak of *grām rāj* as 'a self-governing village, a village republic, not merely a panchayat. This *grām rāj* is to be built up by the villagers themselves, by their own initiative, and not by governmental agencies' (ibid: 49). According to this definition, *grām rāj* and village panchayats are not the same. However, the difference is not explicitly stated. Narayan wrote this in 1946 when India was at the final throes of independence and when he was in the early stages of his political career. However, in his writings after Indian independence, *grām rāj* and village panchayat begins to appear interchangeable. He also begins to provide a more extensive articulation of village panchayat.

According to excerpts from the manifesto of the Socialist Party drafted by Narayan, the village panchayat is an elected body that will act as the channel between the village community and the higher organs within the planning machinery. It is the 'main local agency for the execution of various programmes [sic] of the Government affecting vitally the welfare of villagers, and would represent the Government in all activities in the village. They must have control over village sites and charitable and other communal properties' (ibid: 56).

Narayan argues that village panchayats as decentralized political units are meaningless unless accompanied by economic decentralization. He also claims that contrary to socialist beliefs, nationalization of the modes of production does not necessarily entail economic decentralization. How exactly does a nation state decentralize its economy? Narayan offers some suggestions in his 1961 paper *Swaraj for the People*, a revised version of his original paper *A Plea for Reconstruction of Indian Polity* (1959). The promotion of labor-intensive small-scale machinery, of co-operatives and of the use of local resources as well as a greater emphasis on agriculture-based trainings and education are the obvious ways to decentralization (ibid: 90–91). He does not negate the need for large-scale industries but argues that suitable measures should be devised to protect small-scale industries. What these measures are is left unanswered. He also suggests the integration of small-scale industries with agriculture leading to an 'agro-industrial' community. Elaborating further, he writes, 'an agro-industrial community would, for example, not only process wheat and paddy, fruits and vegetables, sugarcane and cotton, but also manufacture radios, cycle-parts, small machines, electric goods etc.' (ibid: 90). Narayan provides some concrete elaborations of economic decentralization in another speech at the local self-governance conference in 1960. An extract is reproduced here.

I should like to persuade the Community Development Ministry to accept the view that, as part of the Industrial policy of the Government, it should be laid down that certain lines of production should be reserved for the rural areas. If there are industries already existing in those lines, they need not be dismantled, because that would be wasting of resources. Only, there should be no further development in those lines. Some such policy was followed in the beginning, but it did not make much headway. Hand pounding of rice was started, but it was not carried far enough. There are several such things. What I say is that industries of these lines should be reserved for rural areas and no licenses should be given to millers for husking paddy.... I would suggest that the village panchayats and panchayat *samitis* should have the power of giving licenses to industrial undertakings and that those should be given only to those who use the small techniques...there

should be *grām samkalpa*, which means that the village people should take a pledge to use only such products as are produced in their village or in the neighboring villages. (ibid: 64–65)

It must not be forgotten that these proposals were made in the early decade of the transition to democracy. Although it appears idealistic today, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Narayan was an active champion of the Sarvodaya and the Bhoodan movements which were attempts to exemplify the practicality of Gandhian moral rhetoric. It was that period in post-independence Indian history when the choice for either large-scale state-led industrialization or small-scale rural industries were not firmly established and when Gandhian converts such as Narayan were not yet relegated to the margins. Nevertheless, Narayan's economic decentralization fell short of explicating how the sweeping tide of industrialization could be abated for the slow rural 'agro-industry', particularly since the willingness of newly independent India to abate industrialization was not yet pronounced.

This is because Narayan was not aiming for an explanation of the 'how' of economic decentralization so much as he was emphasizing the 'why'. For Narayan, decentralization was important because it was connected to 'participatory democracy', which in turn was connected to 'development'. In *Swaraj for the People* he writes, 'the initiative for panchayat raj originally came not from the political motive of broadening the base of our democracy or laying the foundation of what I have called participating democracy, but from the anxiety to obtain full public cooperation in the execution of development programs' (ibid: 75–76).

For Narayan, participatory democracy meant the percolation of equality and self-determination into every village, every household and every individual. It meant freedom from party-based or class- and caste-based interests and a genuine commitment to the welfare of humanity. These were tall ideals of course. However, linked to these ideals was 'development', which he equates with planning and programs. To give one final example from his writings, '...one of the way to create a spirit of common endeavor was to de-officialise the preparation and implementation of development programs and to hand over the task to the communities themselves.' (ibid: 59). In other words, 'development programs' should be identified and owned by the community and should be de-officialized.

Jayaprakash Narayan's *grām pancāyat* refers to political and economic decentralization, which in turn facilitate development and democracy. However, this decentralization was also about de-politicization. Narayan is critical of partisan politics as well as the links between democracy and electoral system of parliamentary democracy. According to him, adult suffrage is no indication of a real devolution of power. Narayan discusses his proposal of a devolved electoral procedure in his paper (ibid: 92–97), without getting into the details of which the point to note is that beginning with his early Marxist encounters and ending in the Sarvodaya movement, Jayaprakash Narayan's middle way of 'community development' between Marxism and parliamentary democracy concluded by espousing depoliticized governance. It is therefore no surprise that the earliest ideologues of Nepal's Panchayat system would be drawn to Jayaprakash Narayan's Panchayat Raj.

#### **4.6 *Grām bikās* as state-led development: Nepal's adaptation of Jayaprakash Narayan's Panchayati Raj**

Now the question is, what did the Nepali panchayat do with Jayaprakash Narayan's depoliticized democracy and *grām bikās*? In the enthusiasm for a 'native' alternative to economic development, the Nepali proponents adopted Narayan's Panchayati Raj but in a manner to suit the requirements of a party-less 'democracy'. To reiterate, Narayan claimed that a decentralized *grām bikās* was essential for obtaining 'full public cooperation in the execution of development programs' (ibid: 75–76) and to 'de-officialise the preparation and implementation of development programs and to hand over the task to the communities themselves' (ibid: 59). As such, Narayan's *grām bikās* was associated with community

ownership. In Nepal, decentralized *grām bikās* was overtly about community ownership. Overtly, it was associated with the inculcation of agency among the villagers and therefore with ‘self-improvement’. Covertly, however, *grām bikās* and self-improvement were avenues through which the state could exercise its agency. This is contradictory to Narayan’s Panchayati Raj, in which a dominant state had no role.

The following is an example of the Panchayat’s pedagogy on self-improvement from a 1963 book titled Village Panchayat and the Responsibility of the Villager (*Gāum pancāyat ra gāumleko kartavya*), according to which

Responsibilities concerning the village are to be taken by the village people and so the village panchayats are called the small government of the village. The Panchayat democracy was established with the intention of accomplishing rapid *unnati* in order that the responsibility for the *unnati* of the village is divided (,) the villagers are able to immerse in politics from the bottom up and the central government is uncongested. (HMG 1964: 10)

Further on, the booklet elaborates the structure and authority of the village panchayats, the election procedure and the role and responsibility of the *pancas* and the villagers such as contesting or participating in elections to the village panchayat. The booklet also contains elaborate instructions on how to hold village assemblies, on record keeping and minutes of meetings and on tax records. These elaborations were central to the panchayat’s emphasis on grassroots democracy which it claimed would flourish through village assemblies.

Yet another example is from a booklet, Karnali Zone First Intellectual Meet (*Karṇālī Añcal Pratham Buddhijīvī Sammelan*) puts it,

The biggest problem facing *bikās-unmukh* (development-oriented) countries is the establishment of democracy. It is widely agreed that the true meaning of democracy can only be viable when common people of the country are included in governance and (when) economic and social justice are made efficient. The present system has, through the Panchayat, made the people participate in the countries governance from below. Keeping in mind the practical difficulties faced by people in appropriating their legal and political rights due to poverty and illiteracy (,) this Panchayat system has made arrangements for efficient use of political rights such that the true *jansevās* who are immersed in rural life have the opportunity of representing their village, district, zone and nation. (Karnali Aanchal Panchayat 1966: 17–18)

This excerpt claims that it was the coming of the Panchayat that allowed people a role in participatory democracy. However, immediately after, it adds that since the people are unable to appropriate their legal and political rights, it has allowed for intermediaries, the *jansevās*, who, as peoples’ representatives, are to facilitate this participatory democracy. This is a rather contradictory explanation of ‘participatory democracy’ where, on the one hand people are made to participate and on the other they are nursed through the *jansevās*. As disseminator of such pedagogic literature, the Panchayat’s publication division was responsible for mollifying the state’s active agency and instead portraying the Panchayat as the benefactor of grassroots democracy.

Interestingly, one of Onta’s papers discussed above (1996b) also discusses how the Rana era notions of *bhāṣonatti*, *unnati* of the Nepali language, was similarly tied to self-improvement. He argues that the purpose of the *bhāṣonatti* discourse of the anti-Rana faction was aimed at enhancing the self and the *jāti* through acquisition of knowledge. Examining the works of the celebrated Nepali writer Parasmani Pradhan, who lived and worked in Darjeeling, North India, and who is famously remembered as being responsible for the earliest efforts at standardization of the Nepali language, Onta writes, ‘...Parasmani demonstrated that his world was an already calibrated set of countries which had recorded differential progress. Although Hindustan, the country of his residence, had lagged behind many others, Parasmani

showed great belief in the notion of ‘self-improvement through knowledge and perseverance’ (Onta, 1996b: 46). What prompted this interest in self-improvement was the needs of the educated proto middle-class Nepali diaspora to separate itself from the coolie population as well as to create a single Nepali ‘community’ within British India and to glorify Nepal (Ibid: 67–69).<sup>66</sup>

This call for self-improvement is also examined in a much more recent work. Fujikura (2013) looks at the discourse of development in Nepal from the 1950s onwards. According to him, development created a new sense of self, of new motivation and awareness among people. Fujikura argues that it is not that prior to development interventions the rural Nepali populace was unaware of this ‘self’. Rather, the environment created by NGOs allowed for associations that were different from familiar caste and kin ties and were thus ‘new’ to rural life. He writes that community development

linked pedagogy and motivation to the development of villages and the nation. In accordance with this vision, villagers, or whoever became the ‘target’ of development, were exhorted to become aware. They were to produce in themselves ‘selves’ that reflected, evaluated and motivated themselves, so as to help themselves and, if possible, the nation as a whole. (Fujikura 2013: 79)

According to Onta, *bhāṣonnati* discourse of the Rana era was concerned with the cultivation of self-awareness in order to bring about *jāti*, community and self-enhancement (Onta 1996b). Fujikura too argues that the *bikās* discourse in post-Rana Nepal was concerned with self-improvement (Fujikura 2013). How then was the Panchayat’s version of *bikās* as self-improvement different from that of the Rana and post-Rana period as well as the 1990s?

The Panchayat’s version of *bikās* as self-improvement was not associated with Hindu political treatises or with the attempts to craft a *maulik* Nepali *bikās* as *grām bikās*. Similarly, self-improvement was not about economic growth either, the economics of *bikās* not directly encumbered with or espousing self-improvement. What is unique to the Panchayat’s notion of self-improvement is the pedagogic emphasis given by the state on participatory village governance, and not through intermediaries such as I/NGOs that became the trend of the 1990s, which Fujikura discusses. This is not surprising given that the Panchayat considered itself pivotal to all aspects of national life; political, economic and social and therefore as the rightful agent of *bikās*.

However, the preeminence of the state in the *bikās* of the nation, here *bikās* connoting self-improvement, was also pronounced in the 1950s, in the works of Paul Rose (Fujikura 2013). Additionally, both political periods were emphatic that such a *bikās* would promote democracy. What is unique to the Panchayat is that the Panchayat’s democracy required no political agents. Instead, a depoliticized agency was shared between the state and the individual by expunging political parties from the earlier corollaries between *bikās* and parliamentary democracy. Such a scenario fulfilled the Panchayat’s larger attempt to distinguish itself as a ‘democratic’ system that was simultaneously not Western. However, as the next chapter will discuss, the demise of the Panchayat would introduce the collaboration between the state, the political parties and the individual as agents of *bikās*.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that there were two versions of *bikās* in the Panchayat period – *bikās* as planned economic growth and *bikās* as *grām bikās*. While the first was a continuation of the 1950s, the second

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<sup>66</sup> Apart from these three reasons mentioned by Onta, a fourth reason that prompted the ‘proto-middle class’ towards *unnati* through self-improvement was the encounter with the British *sabhyatā*. As already discussed in the second chapter, what propelled the drive for *unnati* among the Rana and the anti-Rana factions was the *sabhyatā* differences between Nepal and the British in India.



was claimed to be typical to the Panchayat regime. *Grām bikās*, rural development, was not unknown in the preceding political era. However, in the hands of Panchayat ideologues, it was sculpted into a novelty arising from Hindu traditions and with no linkage to that of the Nepali Congress-initiated *grām bikās* of the late 1950s. This chapter discusses how the native, Hindu origins of the Panchayat's *grām bikās* are close to superficial since its origins lie in the works of Indian socialist thinking rather than in any religious scripture. Additionally, *grām bikās* is closely knit to the Panchayat's notion of a depoliticized, devolved democracy, one that was assiduously championed as true democracy unlike the parliamentary version which was criticized as a caricature of the West.

In the twin-like conjunction of democracy and development, it is to democracy that Panchayat sources give greater emphasis. The argument is that development is possible only through a democracy devolved to the village. Hence, a lot of energy is spent in defining this decentralization and in assigning the village and the villager as the epicenter of *grām pañcāyat* and *grām bikās*. What does this reveal about *bikās* as a concept? As a reminder, the previous chapter argues that *bikās* was not a concept in the Koselleckian sense in the 1950s since it was confined to the upper echelons of urban, educated Kathmandu. How has it fared in these three decades then?

Apart from the three decades of the Panchayat, there is no period in Nepali history where *bikās* clearly exhibits the centripetal pull of 'tradition' and the centrifugal push of 'modernity', the former through a Hinduized *grām bikās* and the latter through planned development. Additionally, the former is pronounced during the incipient years of the Panchayat, while the latter is prominent as the Panchayat consolidates itself. On the surface, this tug appears to be the result of a monarchical regime that was keen to appear progressive but not Western. A similar predicament of the Gandhians and the Indian nationalists in the heydays of Indian independence has also been recounted in this and the previous chapter. However, while India's predicament of being progressively non-Western stemmed from their colonial background and an external enemy, Nepal's predicament was internal and not solely the result of the political aspirations of the monarchy.

The Panchayat was a partyless system that deliberately arrested the democratic momentum of the fifties. Direct rule by the king went counter to political values imbibed by the small but expanding network of urban dwelling, educated citizens over the decades. It is from this limited pool of politically active members that the Panchayat drew its first-generation supporters. These members had acquired their political education from the Nepali Congress, which itself was a novice in liberal political philosophy. Apart from its support for parliamentary democracy, the Nepali Congress' political philosophies were scarcely articulated. Coming from such a background, the first generation of Panchayat members transposed a socialist *grām bikās* into Nepal as a Hinduized *grām bikās* and fulfilled the dual purpose of loyalty to a Hindu monarch as well as to the democratic spirit which had sparked their political careers.

The second generation Panchayat members were not encumbered by past associations with democratic politics. For them, direct rule by the king was not contradictory to their political beliefs. That the Panchayat was well consolidated by the mid-seventies, received international support and did not have a threatening leader south of its border provided additional self-assurance. Hence, *bikās* as *grām bikās* gradually lost its purpose – that of defining development as well as asserting democracy. It was replaced by the nonpolitical, supposedly technical version of development in the form of planned economic growth as a catapult towards modernity.

This movement away from *bikās* as *grām bikās* towards *bikās* as modernity is part of the transition that Nepal was undergoing. As stated in the earlier chapter, Nepal's first period of transition, the fifties, was more political than socioeconomic. Although the three decades of monarchical rule gives the appearance

of political stability, it was during these three decades that a regime projecting itself as the confluence of the 'traditional' and the 'modern' counterproductively became a wedge dividing the two. The projected confluence was unable to survive and replicate itself because of the incongruity between Hinduism as the inner domain of Nepali-ness on the one hand and modern political aspirations on the other. *Bikās* as modernity in the Panchayat period or *bikās* as economic and humanitarian interventions in the 1990s was divorced from *bikās* as Hinduized *grām bikās*. The duality of *bikās* during the Panchayat is a reflection of a society in transition, one that perched unsteadily on a supposedly traditional philosophy but one that could not avoid being drawn towards sociopolitical forms other than its tradition.

## CHAPTER V: **BIKĀS FOR ALL: THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL LANGUAGE IN THE NINETIES**

Nepal's transition from the Panchayat system to democracy was *political*. The movement for the restoration of democracy in 1990 itself did not lead to sweeping changes in the way Nepali society was organized. It did not violently uproot existing social structures to make way for new ones. Nevertheless, this lack of revolutionary changes does not mean absence of change. Although socioeconomic transformations were neither massively violent nor rapid, gradual transformation did occur following the 1990 political change.

It is in such a context that *bikās* democratized in the Koselleckian sense. As political vocabulary, development was relatively cloistered until the late Panchayat years. Following the 'People's Movement', it seeped into the imagination and the vocabulary of a wider population. The transition of the 1990s opened the political arena and the political language, previously confined either to the bureaucracy or to the handful of politically attuned actors, to a greater number of users. The expansion of political language required the concept of *bikās* to be able to open up to a heterogeneous audience comprising not only the state and a multitude of political parties but also to new agents – the I/NGOs as representative of civil society (composed of, by then, non-state Nepali actors as well as non-Nepali institutions).

Following a summary of the main events of the 1990s, this chapter discusses the departure from *grām bikās* and planned economic growth to *bikās* as macroeconomic management through the Structural Adjustment. It then explores the role of the state and the political parties in defining *bikās* as macroeconomic management with the I/NGOs becoming agents for interventionist 'humanitarian development' (Rist 2006[1997]: 174). Next, the chapter discusses the structural changes that gradually unfolded following the political transition of 1990 and the simultaneous expansion of political vocabulary among a wider Nepali populace. It then explores the effect of structural changes on the democratization of *bikās*. The chapter concludes with a brief remark on what such democratization failed to do in Nepal.

### **5.1. The reinstatement of democracy: a summary<sup>67</sup>**

The Panchayat system continued more or less unruffled until the mid-seventies, but the eighties proved to be a challenge, beginning with the student unrest between April and May 1979. In response to protests, King Birendra announced that a referendum would be held in which people could choose between a multiparty system and a reformed Panchayat regime. The referendum was held on May 2, 1980. In what is commonly believed to be a rigged event, the results were in favor of the Panchayat. The reforms introduced thereafter were miniscule. The constitution underwent minor amendments but the ban on political parties remained in place and the palace continued to have its say in the affairs of the nation.

This was followed by the Nepali Congress's civil disobedience, which floundered following B.P. Koirala's death in 1982. The communists too were gearing themselves for political agitation but were besieged by internal differences. In this manner, political tensions were recurrently dissipated, but in March 1989 the tipping point arrived when India decided to impose an economic blockade on Nepal following the latter's failure to accept Indian demands that Nepal revert to a single trade and transit

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<sup>67</sup> This brief summary is based on the works of Hoftun et al. 1999, Hutt 1994 and Whelpton 2005.

treaty instead of separate ones that had been agreed upon with the Janata government in 1978. This embargo not only resulted in shortage of fuel and other essentials but also acted as an outlet for long-held antagonisms towards the Panchayat. Thus began the ‘people’s movement’.

During the two months of the movement, there were numerous clashes between demonstrators and the police as well as a number of deaths and many arrests. What was significant was that apart from party cadres and students, the movement also witnessed active participation from members of the civil society and professional associations. On April 8, 1990 King Birendra catapulted, promising a constitution reform commission and parley with the opposition. The king also reluctantly agreed to lift the ban on political parties, but it took a considerable amount of public outcry before he succumbed to the demands to completely abolish the Panchayat system.

In April the same year, a caretaker government was formed, with Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as prime minister. It was vested with the task of drafting a new constitution and holding elections to a parliament. The constitution was promulgated in November 1990. It ensured a bicameral system with a 205-member House of Representatives but vested emergency powers in the king. The constitution also declared Nepal a ‘multi-ethnic, multi-lingual kingdom’ but simultaneously called Nepali language the national language. What was controversial was the opposition by the radical wings of the communists against the Constitution Drafting Commission. The radicals demanded elections to a constituent assembly but the Nepali Congress and the liberal wing of the Communists thought otherwise. This would become a bone of contention that, in the next six years, would spark the Maoist war.

The country went into polls on May 12, 1991, with the Nepali Congress as victor. Between 1991 and 2002, the country witnessed more than a dozen instable coalitions between parties with oddly differing philosophies and political agendas. The initial euphoria associated with democracy began wilting in the face of growing corruption and political horse trading among power bearers. The unfortunate manhandling of democracy paved way for the decade-long Maoist war (1996–2006).

## **5.2 *Bikās* as Structural Adjustment**

As discussed in the previous chapter, in spite of attempts to implant a native *bikās* that was true to the spirit of Nepal, the Panchayat regime was not insulated from global trends that entrenched development within one or the other model as a catapult to modernization. However, what is not discussed in the previous chapter is that the last years of the Panchayat also witnessed a shift from state-centric to market-centric economic growth with the emphasis on planned economic growth intact. As a result, the World Bank’s proposal for Structural Adjustment for Nepal, designed during the final years of the Panchayat, bears no resemblance with versions of a native *bikās* that dominated Panchayat literature.

In 1987, a request was made to the World Bank for assistance in ‘stabilization and structural change’ by the Nepali minister for finance and industry under King Birendra’s Panchayat. This was after a preliminary but ‘successful’ eighteen-month stabilization effort in December 1985 which was targeted at countering deteriorations in external and internal accounts. The document detailing this request is annexed to the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment proposal for Nepal. Here the Panchayat regime outlines the following ‘structural problems’ confronting the country,

First, serious environmental degradation (especially in the ecologically fragile hills and mountains), a burgeoning population and pronounced dependence on the vagaries of monsoon agriculture have contributed to a multifaceted rural crisis. Second, macroeconomic management needs to be strengthened further, and requires special effort to improve performance in the areas of domestic resource mobilization and control of recurrent expenditure and inflationary financing. Third, inadequate control in managing development spending. Fourth, our public administration needs to be strengthened further to support the country’s development effort. Fifth, regarding industry and

trade, policies which have sought to maintain a low cost economy and at the same time prevent trade deflection, have, inter-alia, given rise to a large number of controls which have provided unwarranted profits to traders and little incentive to productive industrial investment. Sixth, a substantial number of financially weak and, in some cases, heavily indebted public enterprises have not performed well and are a drain on the budget and the banking system. Seventh, agricultural policies also need to be improved in order to stimulate food and other agricultural production. Financially weak sectoral institutions have not only been a drain on public sector finances but have failed to provide the services for which they are mandated. Moreover, there is substantial scope for increasing the role of the private sector.<sup>68</sup>

Beginning with environmental degradation and ending with the need for privatization, this paragraph not only encapsulates the varied development dilemmas of a country engaged in many decades of development intervention, it also reveals how, in this particular document, what constitutes development bears little resemblance with the versions of *bikās* as *grām bikās* or even with planned economic development as a means of ‘catching up’. What is also surprising is that this document proposes to depart from the regime’s state-led development to make way for liberalization and privatization. The document was prepared at a time when the Panchayat system was being challenged for its anti-democratic stance. However, there was little challenge to the state’s macro-economic policies, and demands from within the Nepali people for economic liberalization were not vociferous. Hence, the document on Structural Adjustment prepared by the World Bank and an annexed document prepared by Nepal’s finance ministry appear pre-dated.

With Structural Adjustment, *bikās* was tied exclusively to macroeconomic management in development expenditures, trade and industry, agriculture and forestry and public sector enterprises. The annex document prepared by the Panchayat regime discusses each of these individually, with the focus being on how best to achieve a certain rate of growth, how best to curb inflation and how to manage the economy efficiently in order to narrow down the fiscal deficit. In terms of trade, the thrust was on introducing liberal import policies and on fostering the export potentials of the carpet and garment industries. In agriculture, the focus was on making more effective those public institutions involved in agriculture as well as opening it up to the private sector with emphasis on fertilizers and seeds. The document is also clear about limiting the scope of public enterprises. The only place where the entire document mentions the panchayat is at the concluding page that discusses forestry where the need ‘to improve the role of the panchayats in developing, managing and using local forestry resources’ (Nepal Structural Adjustment policy matrix, annex VI, p. 5) is briefly stated. The document prepared by the Panchayat’s finance ministry gave no attention to the incongruence between the principles guiding the Panchayat’s decentralized *grām bikās* and that of market liberalization. Similarly, the willingness to depart from state-centric development to market liberalization is not justified, reflecting, once again, the upper hand of the donor conglomerate and Nepal’s compliance with it. However, it must be emphasized that although the Structural Adjustment Loan was approved for Nepal in 1987, it was only implemented after 1990, when the new democratic setup was more receptive to the rule of the market. Once it was implemented, it cemented the associations between *bikās* and macroeconomic management, as is visible in the unquestioning acceptance of this association by the democratic state and the political parties as will be discussed below. In contrast, the I/NGOs do not perpetuate the associations between *bikās* and macroeconomic management. Rather, as part of the rise of what Gilbert Rist calls the oxymoronic ‘structural adjustment with a human face’ that combined ‘IMF-style austerity with

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<sup>68</sup> World Bank Report No. P-4473 NEP, paragraph six of annex V, accessed from <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/511311468060281203/Nepal-Structural-Adjustment-Project>.

‘humanitarian’ concerns of UNICEF’, the I/NGOs were to concern themselves with ‘humanitarian interventions’ (Rist 2006[1997]: 173, 193).

### **5.3. The role of state, political parties and I/NGOs**

#### ***5.3.1. The role of the state***

This section explores the role claimed by the Nepali state in the transition of the 1990s.<sup>69</sup> To do so, it examines the eighth and ninth plans. The Eighth Plan was introduced in 1992 by the democratically elected Nepali Congress government and was based on the World Bank’s Structural Adjustment Loan. Although the transition of 1991 was predominantly political, from direct monarchical rule to parliamentary democracy with constitutional monarchy, it set into motion economic changes as well. While the political transition involved widespread celebrations, the economic transition was a hurried abortion of the state-led model that involved little consultation or coordination outside Singha Durbar, the government secretariat. What is surprising is that market liberalization was championed by the Nepali Congress, a party that was established on democratic socialism and whose members took pride in the socialist legacy of their founding leader B.P. Koirala. Initially, there was little criticism to the Structural Adjustment Loan since the nation was either gearing up for or embroiled in the ‘people’s movement’. Once the frenzy of political activity abated, there were voices questioning ‘this policy as a contradiction to the philosophy of democratic socialism espoused by the Nepali Congress’ (Mahat 2005: 118). Perhaps preempting the criticism, the Eighth Plan justifies itself in the following manner,

As Nepali Congress is committed to democratic socialism, the development concept will be guided by this ideology and the principle objective of the economic policy will be the amelioration of the standard of living of the deprived citizens through economic process. Socialism as conceived by Nepali Congress, is not orthodox socialism where the state dictates but the one by virtue of which the state in a supporting role will bring about social and economic justice through increase in production, creation of employment and special programs directed towards the upliftment of the socially and economically deprived poor people who are left out of the mainstream of development.

It is evident from the changes occurring in the socialist countries that the traditional state directed socialism is no longer suited to the existing global economic scenario. Therefore, the state directed and state controlled economic system pursued for the last thirty years will be gradually phased out and a policy will be adopted to carry out development through free market oriented liberal economic system. (The Eighth Plan 1992: 85)

Similar claims to a ‘modified socialism’ are repeated in the then finance minister Ram Sharan Mahat’s retrospectively written comments on the Eighth Plan. This ‘modified socialism’ was euphemism for privatization, a very un-socialist venture. However, while the plan was being drafted, the planners, of which Mahat was central, seem not to have given this contradiction much emphasis. That the Nepali Congress, a party committed to socialist ideals, would adopt a market-centric economy and criticize state-led economy as detrimental to *bikās* did not appear problematic.

The Eighth Plan stresses that state-led development of the Panchayat regime was antithetical to Nepal’s economy since ‘hollow slogans’ and ‘disappointments’ were all that were parading in the name of decentralization. Similarly, it claims that state control and regulations in bureaucracy and in ‘project implementations’ as well as inefficient public enterprise, administration and planning process were detrimental to Nepal’s development. These, in turn, were tied to the claim that the Panchayat’s

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<sup>69</sup> By state I mean a political organization with a government that rules on behalf of the population within its territory and whose governance is more or less accepted by that population.

decentralization was counterproductive since, in effect, it led to centralization where local bodies were subject to ad hoc decisions from the center and had very little authority in themselves.

The plan claimed that liberalization would unleash Nepal's potentials which had, until then, been trapped in the quagmires of 'traditional' modes of production. The transition from a state-centric to a market-centric economy would, in practice, decimate the power of the state since it would introduce new agents into the political playfield. In such a scenario, how did the post-1990 state envision its role? As many statements in the plan document reiterate, the state did not absolve itself of its economic responsibilities. Neither did it describe market economy as a partnership between the state and the market forces. Rather, the state considered itself facilitating the birth of market liberalization. Among such assertions sprinkled throughout the plan, the following is one example,

The present government now has to *undertake the responsibility* of achieving the economic upliftment of the poor people by removing the economic disorder and distortions of the past. Matching the spirit of the challenge, the government has been striving for reforms in economic management by according priority to liberal economic policies and rural areas. Similarly, appropriate steps have been taken by the popularly elected government in the direction of creating a favorable climate for the development of the private sector. (The Eighth Plan 1992: 45. Emphasis added)

That the government will 'assume the role of a catalyst' (ibid: 89) and will present itself in a 'supportive role' (ibid: 85) are some other ways in which the document describes its place in the transition to market economy. This economic transition was not as spontaneous as the political transition and therefore the structural prerequisites for market economy were in dearth. Hence, the birth of a market economy was announced in the same breath in which the state accepted the need to create market-supporting structures. Since these prerequisites were unavailable, the state-as-facilitator assumed the task of outlining policies, priorities, objectives and programs that it considered essential first steps. Without the intervention of the state, these would not come to being in Nepal. Hence, although the post-1990 state saw its role in social welfare and other areas rather than the market, it also claimed part in market-led development by exercising the authority enshrined in it by implementing structural adjustment measures such as abolition of licensing requirement for industrial investment, opening up sectors such as health, education and infrastructure to the private sector, and introducing a one-window policy for industrial investment (S. Sharma 2003).

If one expects the Ninth Plan (1998–2002) to be a continuation of and an elaboration upon Nepal's entrenchment in market economy, one is mistaken. Rather than being a continuation, the Ninth Plan is a discontinuation of the exclusive emphasis of the previous plan on liberal economy. The document introduces new themes such as Poverty Alleviation and Agricultural Perspective Plan (APP) into the infantile and unsteady attempts at market liberalization commenced only six years earlier. The result is a seven hundred plus page document that makes Poverty Alleviation and the APP the new mantra for the 'goals of long term development' (The Ninth Plan 1998: 60), while occasionally acknowledging earlier commitments to liberal economy. The long-term goal includes attaining a balance between population growth and economic growth, with the plan completely ignoring the former in pursuit of the latter. While the APP is expected to take care of economic growth by accelerating 'the rate of growth of agriculture sector' and by enhancing 'the performance of the non-agriculture sector' by contributing 'towards achieving the macro-economic growth rate of 7.2 percent within the next 20 years' (ibid: 61), it also fails to answer how Poverty Alleviation and the Agricultural Perspective Plan integrate into and facilitate economic liberalization. Apart from reiterations, rhetoric, a stock of statistical data and a brief recount of the steps towards market liberalization initiated in the previous plan, the document is

conspicuously inattentive to detailed planning, particularly to the details of the much lauded economic liberalization.<sup>70</sup>

Nevertheless, it contains some references on how the state envisaged its role in the implementation of the Ninth Plan. Continuing with the previous trend, it admits the importance of the involvement of private sector in the overall achievement of the Plan. However, it deviates from the Eighth Plan in refusing to assign center stage to the private sector and does not see itself as a facilitator to market liberalization. Rather, discussing the objectives of the Ninth Plan, the document states,

Although Nepal has adopted liberal, open and market-oriented economic policies in line with the changes in the world economy, the objective of alleviating poverty cannot be achieved unless the government, market and private sectors complement each other and work together. (ibid: 59)

Further on, it states that the ‘government sector has its own role to play in creating a strong and competent economy, changing economic structure, and eradicating poverty and unemployment’ and that ‘the role of the government sector will not be limited to that of a motivator and facilitator only; it needs to share the risk to some extent as well’ (ibid: 60). How exactly did the state carve its role behind the veil of such affirmations? It did so, as indicated in this as well as the earlier plan document, by sanctioning market favorable policies – a prerogative solely of the state and no other. The Ninth Plan does not dwell upon the cause of this shift from facilitator to partner. Neither does it explain what entailed such a shift since in both documents the primary task of the state is on the policy level.

### ***5.3.2 Role of political parties – the Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist)***

This section discusses election manifestoes of the two prominent parties contesting the 1991 elections in order to explore the ways in which they created and claimed a role in *bikās*. Political parties that had been slumbering for three decades were not only aroused by the restoration of multiparty democracy but were to share space with the erstwhile dominant state in charting the future of the country. In spite of the collective goal, the political parties, particularly the prominent ones such as the Nepali Congress (NC) and, to a lesser extent, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) [CPN (UML)] prided themselves in trailblazing the revolt against the Panchayat. They also displayed a confident assumption of the post-1990 state being an extension of political parties. In other words, in the eyes of the parties, the post-1990 state was not a separate entity but one that would complement and be malleable to the goals defined by political parties outside the confines of the state and the bureaucratic machinery. The election manifestoes of the NC and the CPN (UML) are examples of the disjuncture between political sloganeering and realities of bureaucratic machinery.

#### ***5.3.2 (1) Mentoring democracy and development – the Nepali Congress***

In its election manifesto, the NC presents itself as the main protagonist of Nepal’s political movements against the Ranas and the Panchayat. Simultaneously, it emphasizes the interrelation between democracy and development manifest in democratic socialism, or *prajātāntrik samājvād*. To recall, democratic socialism was also the ideology guiding the Panchayat. Unlike the Panchayat’s emphasis on homogeneity, however, this manifesto’s version of socialist democracy claims to embrace Nepal’s social diversity – its various castes, classes, religions, regions and gender – and pledges to hand over the baton to a heterogeneous people. It emphasizes that the party’s successive role will be that of a

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<sup>70</sup> The steps initiated by the Eighth Plan towards liberal economy included introduction of Value Added Tax (VAT), privatization of certain public enterprises, discontinuing protection of public enterprise, control of subsidies, determination of exchange rates left to the market forces and the establishment of commercial banks and financial institutions (ibid: 2).



mentor, and not that of the main protagonist. Some of the ways in which the election manifesto articulates the NC's mentoring of democracy and development are as follows,

The Nepali Congress wishes to propel (*agrasar garāuna cāhancha*) the Nepali people into a socioeconomic revolution in the same spirit in which it fought a war to establish democracy. (*Nēpālī Kāmgreskō Cunāvē Ghoṣaṇāpatramā Nirvācan* 1991: 372)

In a democratic setup the state or the government are not the sole agents (*kārak tatva*) of national development. Development becomes people oriented and profitable only through active participation of the people (ibid: 372):

The country's development begins with a change in the people's perspectives, thoughts and actions. Thus, the Nepali Congress is committed to creating (*janmāuna*) a new culture that will foster the highest regard for the society and the country as well as inculcate empathy for the voiceless citizens in its bid for national upliftment. (ibid: 373)

By adopting a mixed economy, the NC wishes to propel the society towards prosperity. (ibid: 374)

The manifesto claims to promote *bikās* on the basis of 'mixed economy' that it calls a 'collaborative' effort of the state and 'the people'. Here 'the people' include an assortment of social and professional groups such as businesspersons and industrialists as well as 'the poor rural farmer, laborer, landless, small entrepreneurs, teachers, administrative personnel, ex-army, women, elderly and various disadvantaged ethnic communities' (ibid: 4). It claims to 'make' these categories proactive and consequently to 'make' a socioeconomic revolution guided by democratic socialism possible. According to the manifesto, its version of socialism does not subscribe to state-dominated models but promises an egalitarian distributive process (*nyāyocit bitaran praṇali*), adding that it is only through such a socialism that each social stratum is able to partake in *bikās*.

In spite of these ideological pledges, we know with hindsight that soon after its electoral victory in 1991, the Nepali Congress led by Girija Prasad Koirala government paved the way for liberal market economy. Surprisingly, apart from a few terse references to a 'mixed economy' and to acknowledgements of the role of businesspersons and industrialists in Nepal's *bikās*, this manifesto does not mention privatization. In a brief section on the party's policies concerning trade and commerce, the manifesto assures of promoting local skills and resources, of expanding the employment pool, etc., without once mentioning privatization (*nijikaran*) or economic liberalization (*svatantra bajār un mukh khullā arthabyavasthā*) (as translated in the Ninth Plan). The manifesto does not contain discrete or half-baked pro-market references either.

This absence points to a few possibilities. Either the party was completely unaware of the Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL I) pushed by the World Bank in 1986, followed by the SAL II in 1989. Or the NC was remotely aware the World Bank's push for structural adjustment but chose to ignore it for various reasons, one of which could be the mismatch between its socialist philosophy and that of open markets and the consequences of this for its electoral performance. The third possibility could be that regardless of whether the party was aware or not of the SAL and the impending push for open markets in Nepal, it over-relied its own ability to create a complete break with the past. Carried away by the euphoria of the 1990 victory over the Panchayat, the party took little cognizance of the global pull towards open markets or even the partial attempts initiated in India since the mid-eighties. The Nepali Congress relied heavily on its role as protagonist of the 1990 movement and falsely believed that it could override as well as direct the authority inherent in the state. Hence the inconsistency between its socialist goals and the un-socialist push for open markets once the party was in power.

### 5.3.2 (2) *The role of ideology – The Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist)*

The history of the Nepali communists is one of numerous splinters and fragmentations driven by ideology as well as personality differences. Among the many factions contending the 1991 election, this section analyses the manifesto of the CPN (UML), the largest among the various left splinters as well as the party to form the main opposition in 1991.

What is striking about this slim sixteen-page manifesto is the use of passive voice to address a class-based audience, the *bargas*, comprising ‘the laborer, farmer, capitalists, middle class, intellectuals, youth, women, students’ [Nepali Communist Party (*Ekikṛit Mārksvādī-leninvādīko Ghoṣaṇāpatra* 1991: 8)] and the role assigned to the ideology of *naulo janavād* (new people’s democracy) rather than to the party itself. In other words, although the manifesto belongs to the CPN (UML), references to the party or to any leader are kept minimal. Rather than personifying the party, accentuating events from its history or simply assigning the voice of the manifesto to the CPN (UML), it attempts to lay claim to a communist future by voicing the manifesto through the party’s chosen ideology. In places where the role of the communist party is indicated, it is not exclusively assigned to the CPN (UML) but to the consortium of the seven left forces, the *bāmpanthi*.

Some examples of the passive voice running in the manifesto are, ‘an independent national economy will be developed in *naulo janavād* (.) exploitations prevalent in the agricultural sector, feudal, semi-feudal will be eradicated (ibid: 9), ‘Nepali society will be developed into a multiparty society, open society’ (ibid, 10) in pages 9 and 10, instead of the UML claiming an active agency. Although the concluding pages contain a few active speeches such as a list of ‘the demands of the laborers’ (ibid: 15), ‘the demands of the Nepali people in the educational sector’ (ibid) or ‘the national demands’, these are not claimed by the CPN (UML) either but presented as the demands of those various groups.

The role of the CPN (UML), the manifesto claims, lies in ‘presenting’ the ‘program’ of *naulo janavād* to the Nepali people (ibid: 8). It defines *naulo janavād* as a system to be established by the common force of the abovementioned classes to bring the enemy – capitalism – to its heels. While the first few pages of the manifesto are devoted to describing the capitalist-communist tussle the world over, the remaining pages are devoted to brief descriptions of the bounties of *naulo janavād* that will manifest once an incomplete revolution is brought to a closure.

If the ideology of *naulo janavād* pillars the CPN (UML)’s claims to the future, why does ideology play a dominant role? Although both the Communist and the Congress party were established in the 1940s, party politics in Nepal was dominated by the Nepali Congress until 1990. It was only with the reinstatement of multiparty democracy that the CPN (UML) and splinters within the communists openly and aggressively carved a niche in the political arena. Given their past, which is mostly a chronology of underground ideological consolidations and fragmentations with intermittent involvement in open competitive politics, the CPN (UML) did not have adequate experience in open competitive politics that could contribute to its role. This is unlike the Nepali Congress, which, although outlawed during the three decades of the Panchayat, was a stronger oppositional force against the system. While the NC had a history of organized oppositional politics to its credit, the CPN (UML) drew its strength from ideology. Hence, while the former saw itself as the main protagonist of the 1990 movement and as a mentor of democracy and development, the CPN (UML) chose to project itself indirectly through ideology.

However, as with the NC, the CPN (UML)’s manifesto fails to recognize the advances of open economy since its *naulo janavād* – a wedge in the capitalist machinery – was on the opposite spectrum. This failure points to the disjuncture between the role claimed by political parties and its actual influences. Consequently, it points to a disjuncture between the state and the revived political parties in a tethering

democracy, a democracy that was restored by popular will but one where the representatives of popular will were unable to enforce that will upon the state.

### ***5.3.3 Development and humanitarian concerns – the United Mission to Nepal and ActionAid Nepal***

This section focuses on two I/NGOs – the faith-based United Mission to Nepal (UMN) and non-faith-based ActionAid Nepal (AAN) – as the two ends of the I/NGO spectrum present in Nepal in the 1990s in order to explore how these articulated their role in the post-1990 period. While descriptions of the UMN are based on annual reports from 1985 to late 1990s, those of AAN are based on Fujikura (2013).

The UMN was established in 1954 by a cohort of Christian missionaries at a time when the Nepali state defined itself as a Hindu kingdom. During its early decades, the organization was barred from missionary activities and its members had to adapt their calling in a manner that would not antagonize the sentiments of a Hindu kingdom. It was the concept of development that made this adjustment possible. From its inception, UMN was involved in projects related to health and education as well as technology-intensive hydroelectric schemes and industrial ventures. Since the earliest members were most adept in these areas, it provided them entry points into rural Nepal and offered solutions to the UMN's initial problem of how a Christian mission could operate in a Hindu kingdom.

The annual reports from 1985 to 2000 contain examples of the mission's agency as mediator of technology. Meant for wide dissemination, annual reports are a telling source of the supposed neutrality of development – that I/NGO interventions are free from political affiliations or religious interests of the donor and guided by benevolent concerns for the welfare of the less fortunate. The early UMN reports from 1985 to 1993 do just this. However, with the political changes of 1990, UMN feels slightly emboldened to voice its Christian callings, although it avoids lengthy correlations between missionary work and development. In these later reports, development continues to be associated with transfer of knowledge and technology to Nepali society, with the donors projected as facilitators between technology and its Nepali recipients but with occasional disclosures of its deeper missionary goals.

This emphasis on transfer of technology and knowledge is consistent between 1985 and 1999. An example of the link that UMN drew between development and technology transfer is the establishment of the Butwal Technical Institute (BTI) and the Development and Consulting Services under its engineering and industrial development program. BTI was responsible for providing apprenticeship in hydropower, biogas, manufacturing of foot suspension bridges, grain and water storage tanks, agricultural implements and machinery and tree planting (ibid: 8). The institute remained the only apprenticeship training institute in Nepal until 2000 (UMN Annual Report 1999–2000: 7). The Development and Consultancy Service was responsible for providing designs and consultancy to UMN and non-UMN projects in technical matters as well as guiding the works of the BTI apprentices. By 1999, the UMN was celebrating the headway it had made in hydropower development, 'a key for industrial development in Nepal', and also celebrating its 'enabling' role in technology transfer to Nepal. By casting development in technical terms, not only do they disassociate their actual missionary goals from the technicality of development but also ascribe development certain neutrality. Additionally, the early reports also state that the organization abides by Nepali laws that prohibit proselytizing.

However, the political changes of 1990 unleashed these prohibitions. Most in Nepal were euphoric about the reinstatement of democracy as well as the impetus democracy was hoped to provide to development through the push for market economy. For the UMN, the political change was an opportunity to unveil the ties between development and Christian calling. As the 1993–1994 report on the UMN's health services states,

In the forty years after the courageous doctors Fleming and Carl Friedrichs established a small hospital and dispensary in Nepal, UMN's Health Service Department has worked with exactly the same mandate 'to undertake the proper care and treatment of the sick, the prevention of disease...' with the purpose 'to minister the needs of the people of Nepal in the name and Spirit of Christ and to make Christ known by word and life ....' (UMN, Annual Report 1993–1994)

This is the first instance when UMN openly divulged its missionary goals in spite of the Nepali state continuing to be a Hindu kingdom. Apart from this revelation, further reports also begin to divulge more information regarding the beneficiaries who, until then, had been faceless 'people of Nepal'. For example, the 1993–1994 report states the need to focus on 'marginalized communities' and to 'empower the poor' and mentions specific target groups such as women, the low caste such as *sārki* (blacksmith) and people with disabilities (UMN Annual Report 1993–1994: 11, 21–22). Nonetheless, development continues to be defined in terms of technology transfer, and the annual reports post 1990 refrain from drawing extensive links between development and Christian calling. That economically and socially underprivileged communities of Nepal have been the prominent beneficiaries of missionary work is something commonly known today. However, the base that UMN was building among underprivileged groups was rather clandestine in the early 1990s, and so 'development' proved to be the appropriate discourse through which the calling could be worded in secular terms.

However, a recently published biography of Odd Hoftun, a Norwegian electrical engineer who joined the UMN in 1958, reveals how, from its inception, UMN's development goals were intricately tied to Christian faith. According to the book, since the missionaries were forbidden from preaching, the members realized that the only way to be faithful to their call was to 'work in their professions and show the gospel through their everyday actions' (Svalheim 2015: 58). Thus began various projects in health, education, hydroelectricity, industrial development and rural development, with the early cohort of missionaries carving out a niche according to their qualifications. Of these, Odd Hoftun pioneered hydroelectric development and the 'technical mission' along with likeminded colleagues since they believed that technology was the long-term cure for 'a society based on subsistence agriculture and on young men going to India for employment' (ibid: 60). His colleague Jonathan Lindell, who shared Hoftun's enthusiasm for 'technical mission', meditated on whether it was appropriate for a Christian mission to venture into technical fields. The answer he wrote was,

Yes, for God's mission and purpose on earth are to all segments of society, among all people: if we have the opportunity and the apparent leading of God we should also move into and work on this sector. So the mission let down its fence again and began work in the technical field. If it is possible, we should absolutely move into technology and industry. So the mission crossed yet another barrier and started a technical project. (ibid: 61)

The book describes how the first proposal for the technical mission, called the Technical School, was rejected by the Nepali authority. Hoftun claims that the proposal was accepted when he renamed it Institute of Technology and Industrial Development. This renaming was accompanied by the realization that Nepal's development depended on a 'change in mentality'. Thereafter,

Odd hatched a plan in which each group of eight apprentices would share a house with their own master craftsman and his family, and be under supervision day and night. Both the leadership and the coworkers in the businesses would be inspired and influenced by the classic qualities of the Protestant work ethic: accuracy, honesty, accountability, efficiency, and hard work. Through apprenticeship, these values could be planted in the rough and tough everyday world, and put their mark on the growing industries. (ibid: 63)

Thus, UMN's Institute of Technology and Industrial Development is one example of how the teachings of the gospel found a way into the everyday world of Nepal through the concept of development.

Hoftun's proposal for vocational training in a 'technical school' did not generate excitement or approval among Nepali authorities. Similarly, Hoftun himself appeared unclear until he decided to recast his proposal in a manner befitting his Christian background without antagonizing the sentiments of a Hindu kingdom. When the technology-inclined Hoftun was mulling over possible interface between Christian teachings and a non-Christian society, Nepali society was drawing corollaries between technology and development. As discussed in chapter three, *bikās* was associated with technology, trainings, survey and statistics in the 1950s. Hence, the missionary's proposal for technological interventions was well received by the Nepali authority that was eager for 'development', while for Hoftun, development offered the interface he was seeking. This secular interpretation of development established by UMN missionaries in the early 1950s continued to guide the mission's activities until the late 1990s.

Unlike the UMN, AAN was a non-faith-based I/NGO. Hence, although development interventions did not hinge to religious purposes, AAN gave precedence to the associations between development and human rights and, in turn, to the politicization of development through its involvement in areas that were traditionally not within the space of interventionist development, such as its support for the bonded labor movement. As an extension of the UK-based charity ActionAid, AAN was established in 1982 and initially focused on education, health care, agriculture and income generation. Its annual reports from the early 1990s are replete with phrases such as 'empowerment', 'participation' and 'community based approach' where it positions itself as facilitator of 'community development' instead of a service delivery apparatus. Such a development is to be achieved, its 1991/92 report states, when 'field staff live with the community, focus on the poorest, encourage community awareness, and provide ideas and resources for the development of formal and informal institutions' (AAN Annual Progress Report, July 1991–June 1992: 1). Its annual reports for the entire decade consistently refer to community development as the principle goal.

As discussed in chapters three and four, the community development approach was not new to Nepal, with both the USOM and the Panchayat system prioritizing it. AAN therefore appears to be a continuation of a long precedence of associating development with community development, with the organization positioning itself as facilitator. However, as Fujikura (2013) discusses, the community development that AAN and its local partner, such as the Society for Participatory Cultural Education (SPACE), promoted was one that arose under changed global circumstances. According to Fujikura, AAN's community development approach aimed at opposing

a global trend that would reduce the welfare responsibilities of state. In addition, they wish to insist that supra-state organizations become more accountable. That they invoke the language of human rights is intended to interrupt the language of economy and efficiency that characterized the logic of liberal governmentality. (Fujikura 2013: 157)

They did so, Fujikura writes, through the human rights-based approach (HRBA) developed by Overseas Development Institute, through which the attempt was to make the state accountable for economic as well as social and political rights at a time when development was becoming entrenched in macroeconomic measures. The approach allowed AAN to enter into areas such as the *kamaiyā* (bonded labor) freedom movement in the western plains of Nepal to support the *kamaiyā*'s demands for land rights, an issue otherwise deemed to be 'interference in internal politics' (Fujikura 2013: 156).

Unlike the state and the political parties that conjoined development with macroeconomic measures, both the UMN and AAN associate development with community welfare. While the UMN was overtly humanitarian and covertly Christian, the AAN was oriented towards community development. However, both cases were made possible by the changed circumstances of the 1990s when the state handed over its welfare role to the I/NGOs, who then amalgamated into a civil society. Prior to the 1990s, it was the state facilitating welfare and community development regardless of the presence of a

small number of I/NGOs. The reinstatement of democracy in 1990 not only paved the way for market liberalization, it also witnessed an expansion of political consciousness and a simultaneous expansion of the I/NGOs – civil-society cluster that became the new successors of humanitarian development.

#### **5.4 Proliferation of political parties and of political vocabulary after 1990**

The 1990s witnessed two separate kinds of transformations, the first being an accelerated regime change and the second a gradual structural transformation. An accelerated political change occurred in 1990 and 1991, beginning with the dissolution of the Rastriya Panchayat, the national assembly of the Panchayat era, the appointment of Krishna Prasad Bhattarai as prime minister and the formation of an interim government in April 1990, followed by parliamentary election and drafting a new constitution. Such an accelerated political change provided the impetus to political plurality and to the spread of political consciousness (*rājnitik sacetanā*) outside traditional circles of political elites. However, this latter achievement, an awakening of political consciousness among previously marginalized social segments, was not revolutionary but the beginning of a gradual and ongoing transformation.

As the country prepared for parliamentary elections scheduled for May 1991, the number of newly formed political parties began to swell, and by early 1991 seventy-four parties had been formed, out of which forty-seven applied for recognition. Of these, forty-four were accepted by the Election Commission for registration. However, only twenty of the forty-four accepted parties fielded candidates, eight won seats, and only six obtained the three percent national votes required to retain their status as national parties in the next election. The eight parties that won seats were the Nepali Congress, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), the United Peoples Front Nepal, Nepal Workers and Peasants' Party, Nepal Communist Party (Democratic), Sadbhawana Party, National Democratic Party (led by Lokendra Bahadur Chand) and the National Democratic Party (led by Surya Bahadur Thapa). The Nepal Workers and Peasants Party and the Nepal Communist Party (Democratic) were unable to obtain the 3 percent vote (Hachhethu 2002: 73).

The Nepali Congress won 110 out of 205 seats and formed the government with Girija Prasad Koirala as prime minister, and the CPN (UML) became the main opposition party in the parliament. Unfortunately, the Koirala-headed government could not complete its tenure due to internal conflicts. The midterm elections in 1994 produced a hung parliament, with CPN (UML) being the largest party in the parliament. CPN (UML) formed a minority government but had to step down after nine months.<sup>71</sup> Between November 1994 and May 1999, Nepal saw eight unstable coalition governments with various left, right and center combinations.

The point is that much of the 'revolution' lasting several months ended with the promulgation of the 1990 constitution. The victory of the Nepali Congress in the parliamentary election in May 1991 was the supposed beginning of stability and the reinstatement of Nepali democracy. However, events in Nepal have proved to be otherwise. Nevertheless, the promulgation of the 1990 constitution was a significant achievement of the 'People's Movement' since it freed society from Panchayat era curtailments.

The 1990 constitution decreed that Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual democratic Hindu constitutional monarchial Kingdom. The constitution guaranteed equality to citizens irrespective of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe, or ideological conviction.<sup>72</sup> It is these constitutional achievements that

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<sup>71</sup> For reasons for the end of CPN (UML)'s rule, see Hachhethu 2002: 73.

<sup>72</sup> [http://www.nepaldemocracy.org/documents/national\\_laws/constitution1990.htm](http://www.nepaldemocracy.org/documents/national_laws/constitution1990.htm)

is often referred to when calling the ‘people’s movement’ a revolution since, on paper, they were indeed a radical break with the past. However, in practice, these legislative assurances were not immediately nor widely implemented and were not completely democratic and egalitarian either, since there were contradictions within it that was to spark a Maoist uprising a few years later.<sup>73</sup>

This is reminiscent of the Land Reform Act of 1958 which, as discussed in chapter three, was a progressive legislative move but ineffective in practice since the ruling parties were unwilling to antagonize their support base composed of conservative factions. However, what distinguished the 1990s from the 1950s is the politicization of the non-elites through the rise of party politics. In the 1950s, the Nepali Congress was composed of urban educated or semi-educated members while the Communist party drew its membership from disgruntled erstwhile Nepali Congress members and a few radicalized members of the peasant community. By the mid-1990s, political membership drew from a more diverse social strata differentiated along caste, class, gender, religion, region and ethnic lines. Expansion in party formation post 1990 provided a bigger platform for plural contestations and for wider politicization. Discussing the impact of the proliferation of political parties, a report on democracies in South Asian countries states, ‘A closer look at the level of citizens’ engagement with political parties shows signs of an expanding base of electoral democracy. The phenomenon of a larger number of smaller parties brings parties closer to the citizens and makes it possible for them to engage in democratic action’ (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies 2008: 85). Along with the growing ethnicisation of political parties, the report also discusses the rise of dynastic politics based on patronage and vested interests all over South Asia. Regardless, the report affirms the role of political parties in deepening participatory democracy.

The deepening of democracy is also partly a result of the expansion of education. As noted by Hoftun and his colleagues, Nepal’s literacy rates had significantly increased from 0.7 percent in 1942 to 40 percent in 1980. They similarly point to the expansion of independent Nepali newspapers, human rights and professional groups by the late 1980s to support their claim that Nepali society in late 1980s was aware of the contradictions of the Panchayat system and was anxious for change and hence the ‘revolution’ of 1990 (Hoftun et al. 1999: 220, 224).

According to another study, access to education witnessed a quantum leap from 8,500 students enrolled in primary schools in 1950 to more than a million students by 1989, from 332 schools in 1950 to 15,834 in 1989, from literacy rate of merely 5.3 percent in 1952/54 to approximately 36 percent in 1989 (Skinner and Holland 2009[1996]) and from two colleges affiliated to Indian universities in 1951 to more than 600 colleges affiliated to Nepali universities in the recent days (Bhatta 2009). Studying the impact of this expansion, Skinner and Holland (2009[1996]) argue that schools, textbooks and the schooled were engaged in producing selves that repudiated hierarchy, ‘tradition’ and privileges based on caste and gender while simultaneously associating education with symbolic capital and producing the uneducated as ‘the other’. They write,

Several Naudadan<sup>74</sup> teachers had been active in student organizations and movements at the campuses where they had studied. These organizations were aligned with various political parties,

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<sup>73</sup> The constitution drafting process itself was embroiled in conflict, with political parties expressing diverse views as to who should draft and approve it. Members of the radical communist groups such as CPN (Fourth Convention), United Nepal People’s Movement, Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal) and Communist Party of Nepal (Masal) demanded a constituent assembly, which was opposed by the Nepali Congress. Eventually, the constitution recommendation commission consisting of members from the interim government and the chief justice of the Supreme Court as chairperson presented the final draft in November 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Naudanda is the pseudonym assigned to the research site, a sub-district unit in Central Nepal, by the authors.

parties that were banned until the fall of the Panchayat government. Teachers often carried their political views to the schools where they subsequently taught. Sometimes in class and often outside the classroom, teachers discussed politics with students and other Naudadans. They openly challenged what they saw as the corruption and oppressive practices of the Panchayat government, and after its fall, the corruption and abuse of the Congress party which won the majority of seats in the 1991 elections.

Within this heteroglossic milieu, students developed and orchestrated their own views. While not challenging 'development' per se, they began to question the ways *bikās* was being carried out by those in power. They debated among themselves what kind of political system could bring about development for the poor and rural populace, development which could free them from oppression by wealthier landowners and from a conservative social system which placed women and lower castes in a relatively powerless position. (Skinner and Holland 2009[1996]: 323)

A more recent, Marxist assessment of the expansion of education states,

The rapid expansion of schooling beginning in the 1970s had a similar effect. It tended to draw the young further or away from farming and generated an imaginary among the young and old alike that the schooled should better not soil their hands.... While the economic policies required to open up non-agricultural and urban jobs did not materialize, most of the schooled found themselves in a limbo. Some of them started to fill up the towns and cities, moved to Indian towns looking for jobs, and beginning with the 1990s, increasingly enrolled in labor migration to East Asia, West Asia and beyond...It also created a large body of young persons who, at least for part of their life, muted or shed their attachment to the family farm and became part of the semi-proletariat in towns and cities in Nepal and elsewhere. (Mishra 2015: 49–50)

The above extract is part of a lecture by Chaitanya Mishra where he discusses the factors that resulted in the 'democratic revolution' of 2006. Apart from the expansion of education, Mishra argues that land reforms and migration (ownership migration, labor migration and military migration which he discusses separately) are the other prominent factors contributing, over the decades since the 1950s, to gradual structural transformations of what was once a closed, predominantly agrarian economy. Mishra argues that land reforms initiated in the 1950s and 1960s gradually loosened ties to land and, in turn, to the community. Instead of relying on agriculture and on old structures and relations of productions, Nepali society swayed towards new forms of livelihood connected to the capitalist markets such as the service industry and to the expanding international need for cheap labor which absorbed the semi-educated, unemployed Nepali. As Nepal's entrenchment in the capitalist world grew, so did the disjuncture between a professed democracy and the 'components of un-democracy' of the 1990s. Mishra writes,

The post-1990 state failed to realize that democracy was not merely a matter of governing existing institutions democratically but also identifying and addressing deeper political, economic and cultural roots and components of un-democracy. The long standing ethnic, caste, regional hierarchies and divides were difficult to struggle against within an autocratic set up. Not so in a democracy. The failure to bridge the gap between citizenship and 'low caste-hood' and that between a 'high-caste' citizen and marginalized ethnic person was something democracy could not tolerate. (ibid: 56)

The 1990 movement provided impetus to the gradual process of structural transformations that had begun in the 1950s. Factors discussed in Skinner and Holland and in Mishra such as the expansion of education, land reforms, changing class relations and migration contributed to this impetus. These factors not only invigorated citizens' claims to ethnic, regional, religious, linguistic and gender-sensitive treatments from a democratic state but also required that the claims be championed through political associations and articulated through political vocabulary. As a result, the users of political vocabulary quickly expanded in the 1990s. *Bikās*, as part of this vocabulary, exhibited the Koselleckian parameters of democratization in response to the gradual social transformations and the pull of agency.



## 5.5 Changing social structures and *bikās*

In pre-democratic Rana autocracy, *unnati* was claimed by two camps – the Rana aristocrats and their subjects/opponents, the anti-Rana coalition of educated, mostly high-caste men living in exile. The dawn of democracy in 1950 saw the wilting of aristocracy and the ascendance of a landed, educated ‘middle class’ as the new power bearers. With it, what was previously a cloistered court language became accessible to the citizens of a young democracy. Court language, or the language that differentiated itself from rustic, folk language, was gradually embraced by this politically conscious, socially mobile ‘middle class’ Nepali. In the process, the bifurcated claimants to *unnati* of the Rana era were replaced by heterogeneous claimants to *bikās*. This transition occurred in a sociopolitical setting that had become slightly more plural and slightly less elitist. Although a gradual expansion of the users of political language also occurred in the Panchayat decades, it was overshadowed by a state that claimed hegemony in matters economic as well as cultural. Hence, while an exchange between political language and common, folk language was ongoing, the process was submerged below the currents of the Panchayat’s unifying mission.<sup>75</sup>

With the demise of the panchayat and the embrace of political plurality in the form of multi-party democracy, political language seeped into and became a part of everyday language. In other words, by the nineties, political vocabulary had occupied the imagination and the language of the Nepali citizen; it had become democratized. The role claimed by the three prominent players of the nineties – the state, the political parties and the I/NGOs – could not ignore the emerging social plurality.

The earlier sections discuss that while the state claimed its role in *bikās* as a facilitator and partner, the political parties, both the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML), revealed a disjuncture between their claimed role and the enforcement of that role when the hour arrived. The CPN (UML) saw its role overtly as an intermediary of *bikās* through technology transfer and covertly as practitioner and disseminator of Christianity, while the AAN politicized *bikās* through its human rights approach. The question to now answer is this: in these various claims, what became of the emerging plurality?

In spite of their different approaches, both the Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML) were aware of the need to speak to and to speak on behalf of a motley of social and economic categories, or *barga* (class), instead of an undifferentiated, non-specific blur of ‘people’. This is evident from their respective manifestoes where both parties acknowledge ‘the people’ as comprising of various ethnic, geographic, religious and professional categories. Additionally, each category was politically aware and was gradually consolidating into groups based on these divisions. The need felt by the parties to speak to and speak on behalf of the heterogeneous people reveals that these ‘classes’ were considered politically aware, active and therefore important to address and were incorporated into the political discourse by 1991. Additionally, the manifesto of the CPN (UML) as well as that of the NC reveals that political language and political concepts became available to people who were gradually transforming from citizens with limited political rights to citizens with unrestrained rights to participate in the democratic

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<sup>75</sup> In examining Panchayat-era textbooks as examples of how a ‘generic’ village is ‘shaped not in counterdistinction to the city but in relation to *bikās*’, Pigg’s work discusses how the concept of *bikās* occupied the language of the state and aid workers as well as of villagers (Pigg 1992: 495). However, the textbooks examined by Pigg propagated the Panchayat’s views of *bikās* and not that of ethnically, regionally, religiously diversified notions of the people. Hence, although *bikās* was part of everyday vocabulary in the Panchayat period, it was also something that was associated with materials, with outside agency and with compliance with village panchayats (Stone 1989). It is only after 1990 that *bikās* begins to be associated with ethnic, religious, regional and gender grievances. As part of political vocabulary, *bikās* gets appropriated by a heterogeneous population to confront, demand or negotiate with the state only after 1990. Hence the claim made in this chapter that *bikās* democratized in the 1990s and not earlier.

process. It is due to this transformation that political language could not remain the exclusive possession of the political parties. Rather, it became accessible to a diversified mass. In other words, political language, *bikās* included, became democratized in the Koselleckian sense.

This democratization of *bikās* is difficult to tease in the Eighth and Ninth Plan documents that project the state as facilitator of *bikās*. In these documents, the state appears oblivious to the social plurality that became pronounced post 1990. Of course, plan documents do not have the same purpose as political ones. Hence, party documents appear more mindful of a diverse and politically conscious population than do plan documents. Nepal's plan documents represent *bikās* as an economic process with an economic objective instead of a sociopolitical process. However, such myopia is not restricted to the plan documents but is pervasive in the way the Nepali state has viewed its role in the transition to democracy since the 1950s. Apart from its role as the authority from which various socioeconomic policies stem or, more broadly, as facilitator of economic development, the state has displayed little regard for the contradictions arising from an accelerated political transformation minus the accompanying socioeconomic transformation. Such a failure, as Chaitanya Mishra's extract in the above section has stated, is also responsible for the state being embroiled in a decade-long war with the Maoists. The Nepali state was slow in taking cognizance of the gradual structural transformations and, in turn, to the plural, politically assertive and articulate citizens that emerged following the restoration of democracy. While the state promulgated land reforms, promoted the expansion of education and invested in infrastructure and urban expansion, it failed to look beyond the short-term, mostly economic impact of such measures. While the political language was becoming more accessible, accommodative and was providing a common medium to an otherwise diverse populace, thanks to multi-party politics and the need of these parties to reach out to the diversity, the state was unable to reciprocate.

Unlike the contrast between political parties and the state, the former aware of a politically conscious mass and the latter less sensitive to social plurality, UMN and AAN were embedded in the process of societal transformation. They were part of the landscape of a transforming society. While their role in technology and knowledge transfer was pronounced and their religious or human rights aims were variously pronounced, such roles became possible only in a society that was opening up and receptive to plural positions and ideas. Hence, there existed a two-way exchange between the role of the I/NGOs and the structural transformations underway in Nepali society, each influencing and responding to the other. Through their role as disseminator of technology and knowledge, the UMN and AAN were contributing in the creation of an open, accommodative society. Simultaneously, it was the plasticity of the post 1950s which amplified in the 1990s that opened up spaces in which external bodies such as these could operate and broaden.

Nepal's social and political plurality in the 1990s not only led to the democratization of *bikās*, but to its ideologization and politicization as well. From human rights and *naulo janavād* to structural adjustment, privatization and technology transfer, *bikās* had ceased to mean anything specific. It was, as Koselleck says, open-ended, unspecific, abstract and sometimes even contradictory and therefore easy to incorporate into ideologies that were themselves abstract and malleable according to the socio-political background of the user (Koselleck 2011). An ideologized *bikās*, in turn, became potent ammunition for political slogans that were amorphous and able to adjust to the plurality of the 1990s.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the 1990s was driven by an accelerated political transition from party-less Panchayat to multi-party democracy. This transition was different from the political transition of the 1950s since its impact ran into deeper socioeconomic layers and resulted in an expansion of political consciousness (*rājnitik sacetanā*) among previously marginalized categories. Consequently, the

expansion of political consciousness required a simultaneous expansion of political vocabulary such that it led to the democratization of *bikās* in the Koselleckian sense and, in turn, to the metamorphosis of *bikās* into a concept.

In the context of Western Enlightenment, Koselleck explains democratization as the opening up of political language to ‘everyone’, by which he meant ‘all educated persons’ and not one to be used ‘exclusively by the upper ranks of the aristocracy, by jurists, and by the learned’ (Koselleck 2011: 10). In Nepal, it is after the restoration of democracy in 1990 that such ‘fields of expression’ became accessible to ‘all educated persons’ through which those not directly involved in politics could articulate and, in turn, participate in the discourse on politics. However, such accessibility was made possible while remaining entrenched in caste- and class-based hierarchy. Hence, while democratic values and modern political concepts were occupying the imaginations of the people, including those that had, until the late 1980s, remained on the fringe, it accentuated the incompatibility between values professed by the agents of change – the state, the political parties and the I/NGOs – and everyday realities of ‘everyone’. The incompatibility became evident as the euphoria associated with the restoration of multiparty democracy abated and participatory democracy withered in the face of nepotism, patronage politics and politics driven by personal animosities. In turn, the neglect of the underprivileged and marginalized but, by then, politically conscious and politically articulate citizens was also evident.

While amplifying such contradictions, political concepts were concurrently able to cement the mismatch between accelerated political changes and the less radical structural changes. In the 1990s, the educated but unemployed, the politicized but excluded and the hierarchy bound were all able to project a better future through the elastic, ambiguous medium of *bikās* since it had, by the nineties, become a future-oriented concept, a concept that constantly projected a better future for a much larger swath of politically conscious mass than in the 1950s. But the paradox of a politicized mass entrenched in a largely un-egalitarian society continued. While *bikās* was expounded as the panacea, by percolating into everyday language, it also contributed in making structural contradictions acutely visible. Perhaps it is no surprise that when a fledging Maoist party launched a ‘People’s War’ in 1996, they initially disassociated *bikās* from its positive connotations and instead made Nepal’s ‘underdevelopment’ the foundation for the war.

## CHAPTER VI: REINTERPRETING 'BOURGEOISIE' *BIKĀS*: DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF NEPAL (MAOIST)

This chapter deals with the tumultuous events of the Maoist war which was launched in February 1996 with the initial aim of overthrowing monarchy, annulling the 1990 constitution and replacing it with a new, secular constitution to be drafted by the people's elected representatives as well as of putting a halt to 'imperialist' agendas (The Maoist 40-point Demand). As the war intensified, these goals were articulated explicitly in terms of Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology based on which the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)] saw itself trailblazing a 'New democratic revolution' against a 'semi-feudal', 'semi-colonial' kingdom (*One Year of the People's War in Nepal* in Karki and Seddon 2003).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the decade-long war was preceded by a period of political *sacetanā* among the mass and, with it, the spread of political language. The democratization of political language allowed people, otherwise unconnected to politics, a medium to participate in the political discourse. The Maoist war expedited this democratization further since it was supported and fought largely by marginalized ethnic communities that became regularly exposed to political propaganda from the party's higher ranks. In such a scenario, what happened to the concept of *bikās*? Or, what happened to political language in Nepal once it had been democratized in the Koselleckian sense?

With the above question as a guidepost, this chapter attempts to chart the course taken by development and its parallels – underdevelopment and progress – the latter resurfacing in Maoist literature after a long hiatus. It attempts to explore what was specifically Marxist-Leninist-Maoist about such vocabulary. Additionally, it attempts to answer what the Maoist war portends for the concept of development and for political language.

The chapter begins with a description of Nepal's fragmented communist history. Next, it discusses how the lack of development was seen as one of the causes of the war. Based on the writings of Maoist ideologues, the chapter then explores what development, underdevelopment and progress signified during the war and immediately after. It also discusses the critique of CPN (M)'s reading of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism by the Marxist scholar Chaitanya Mishra, a neo-Marxist who was close to the CPN (UML) in the 1990s. The aim is to situate, within this critique, the CPN (M)'s adoption of a 'bourgeoisie', 'imperialist', 'economic development' as development instead of the more Marxist development-as-process after the war. Next, this chapter draws from Koselleck's theory on the durability of political language and concepts to understand the CPN (M)'s adoption of political vocabulary it had earlier derided as 'bourgeoisie'. The conclusion discusses the implication of such adjustments for Nepali society.

### 6.1 History of Communists in Nepal

#### 6.1.1 Early communist parties

The person who is credited for having established the communist party in Nepal is Pushpa Lal Shrestha, who initiated his political career as a member of the Nepali National Congress but was dissatisfied with its policies of non-violent struggle. He quit the party and began working on the Nepali translation of the Communist Manifesto, which was released on September 15, 1949, the date considered the founding day of the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN).

Factors such as the Russian and Chinese revolutions, the increasing momentum gained by the Communist Party of India (CPI) and growing opposition against the Ranas provided impetus to the formation of the CPN. However, the party consolidated itself only after the demise of the Rana regime.

It condemned the 'Delhi compromise' that had been mediated by the Indian government between the king, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress. It adopted an anti-Indian, anti-Congress stand, calling the Delhi compromise a 'betrayal of the revolution' while also opposing 'liberal democracy'.

Before the party could gain a foothold in the newly democratic environ, however, its fate plummeted during the Nepali Congress-led Matrika Prasad Koirala government when it was outlawed for supporting the Rakshya Dal, a political group radically opposed to the Delhi Compromise. The ban was eventually lifted four years later. During the years of the ban between 1952 and 1956, the party worked under the guise of the Kisan Sangh.

### ***6.1.2 Splits within the party***

During the Panchayat decades, ideological and personality clashes among its leaders eroded the organizational unity of the CPN. The party divided into three branches: the moderates, the radicals and the extremists. The moderate group was led by Keshar Jang Rayamajhi. It was closer to the palace and the USSR and was called the pro-Moscow faction. The radical group was led by Pushpa Lal and was ideologically closer to Beijing. This group professed violent struggle against the Panchayat system in collaboration with the Nepali Congress. The extremist led by Mohan Bikram Singh was known as the Maoists. Unlike the radicals, the extremists demanded that election be held to a constituent assembly. They opposed constitutional monarchy as well as prospects of working with moderate, non-communist parties.

In 1971, a 'central nucleus' was formed in order to consolidate these fragments. However, the 'nucleus' was unable to remain united for long and in 1974 split into the CPN (Fourth Convention) led by Mohan Bikram and Nirmal Lama and the CPN led by Man Mohan Adhikari. The communist party led by Adhikari joined with smaller groups and formed the CPN-Marxist Leninist in 1978. By 1991 the CPN-Marxist Leninist joined hands with Pushpa Lal's CPN (Marxist) to form the CPN (Unified Marxist Leninist). At the time of the 1990 movement, the CPN (UML) was the largest communist party in the country.

While the CPN-Marxist Leninist was consolidating with smaller groups, the CPN (Fourth Convention) was experiencing numerous breakoffs. In May of 1979, King Birendra announced a national referendum, regarding which disputes arose between the two leaders of the Fourth Convention. Mohan Bikram Singh was unwilling to participate in a referendum called by the king, while Nirmal Lama, general secretary of the Fourth Convention, accepted the referendum and faced opposition within his party. As a result, he was forced to resign from his post. Ultimately, Singh formed his own party, the CPN (Masal) in 1983. In 1985, CPN (Masal) fragmented into CPN (Mashal) and CPN (Masal). CPN (Mashal) was led by Mohan Vaidya. Vaidya was subsequently replaced by Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias Prachanda, who would later become chairman of the Maoist party that would launch the decade-long civil war in 1996.

After the restoration of multiparty parliamentary system in 1990, the Fourth Convention led by Lama, Mashal led by Dahal and the Masal led by Singh united to form the CPN (Unity Center), with Prachanda as the general secretary. The newly formed interim government between Nepali Congress and the CPN (UML) did not address the CPN (Unity Center)'s demand for an election to a constituent assembly. Instead, elections were held to a parliament under a new constitution. Despite this, the United People's Front, a sister organization of the Unity Center, took part in the 1990 election 'in order to gain a new platform to expose the inadequacies of the parliamentary system' (Thapa with Sijapati 2003: 37). In 1994, this Unity Centre split again into the Prachanda-led faction and the Nirmal Lama-led faction. In 1995 the Prachanda-led faction was christened CPN (Maoist). In the 1990s, the CPN (Maoist) was a marginal entity, and it does not come as a surprise that mainstream political parties did not take its

threats seriously when it declared war against the Nepali state. In the course of the decade-long 'People's War', internal differences were initially muted or stifled to prevent the derailment of the 'revolution'. However, the party fragmented post its 2006 victory.

### ***6.1.3 Post-war fragmentations within the CPN (M)***

In November 2006, the CPN-Maoist signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the mainstream leaders of the Seven Party Alliance, bringing the decade-long war to a closure, and in April 2008 elections were held to a constituent assembly, in which the Maoists emerged victorious, with Prachanda becoming the first prime minister of the federal democratic republic of Nepal. In spite of this victory, the unity of the Maoists had been in jeopardy ever since differences arose between its leaders regarding the autonomy of the Tarai region – the fertile belt along Nepal's southern border with India, which is inhabited by a large percentage of Nepali people of Indian descent as well as other ethnic groups. The Tarai People's Liberation Front (Janatāntrīc Tarāi Mukti Morcā, JTMM) was born in 2004 after splitting with the Maoists over ideological issues and their disagreements relating to the Tarai. The JTMM has not remained free from factionalism either.

Apart from the Tarai-based political groups, there has been further cleavage within the CPN (Maoist). While in 2009 Matrika Yadav split from the mother party citing dissatisfactions over the termination of the war, which he believed was premature, another severe setback was the breakaway of veteran leader Mohan Vaidya in 2012 citing similar 'neo-revisionist' tendencies within the party's leadership. Since by 2009 the CPN (M), the mother party, had been rechristened the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), the Vaidya-led faction decided to claim the old name and hence called itself the CPN (M), adding to the confusion among the many Maoist ruptures and their nomenclatures. In 2014 this Vaidya-led CPN-M split after Netra Bikram Chand accused the party of being unable to lead a class struggle in Nepal.

In 2015, Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai, among the central figures and key architects of the decade-long civil war, resigned from the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and set up a new party called Naya Shakti Nepal. Although differences over leadership had been brewing between chairman Prachanda and Bhattarai since the party's transfer into mainstream politics, Bhattarai's break away reveals the weakened stature of the various Maoist splinter parties in recent times.

Among the extremists and the radicals, the nature of class struggle and the process leading to the 'revolution' were unresolved contentions. While the extremists – the Maoists – adamantly held to violence and to their demands for elections to a constituent assembly, the radicals swayed between violence and peaceful 'infiltration' into the democratic setup. Hence, although a 'revolution' was the ultimate goal for both factions, the means to attaining this goal was disputed. Depending on the extent to which they could agree upon the means to the 'revolution', the extremists and the radicals have merged or diverged at various political junctures.

On the other hand, what defines the moderates within the communists – the CPN (UML) – is not its ideology. Although the party was compelled to work through underground organizations during the Panchayat regime, violent underground activities were gradually abandoned when the king-led Panchayat regime began using the moderate Marxist-Leninist party as a counter weight to the Nepali Congress. Additionally, the camaraderie between the Panchayat administrators and members of the moderate communists also contributed to the government's feigned ignorance of CPN (UML)'s 'non constitutional' activities during the partyless Panchayat decades (Hachhethu 2002: 62). Instead of violent confrontations, the moderates gradually began opting for open, competitive politics and, by the 1990s, had reinvented itself as a mainstream party that subscribed to parliamentary democracy. During the early nineties, the moderates were able to adjust to the tides of democratic politics while professing

alliance to Marxist-Leninist ideology.<sup>76</sup> However, more than its readings of Marxism-Leninism, the CPN (UML)'s significance has been as the largest communist party to counter the hegemony of the Nepali Congress. Entrenched as it is in parliamentary politics, the moderate faction is regularly lambasted by the radicals and the extremists for lacking ideological consistence and deliberations.

#### **6.1.4 Parliamentary democracy and the Communist Party of Nepal**

The moderate section of the Nepali communists leaned towards parliamentary democracy and monarchy since its inception. The enlarged and rechristened CPN (UML) outmaneuvered the Nepali Congress in the 1994 parliamentary elections, won more seats in the House of Representatives than the Congress and formed a minority government with its leader Man Mohan Adhikari as prime minister. Such an unconventional combination of Marxist-Leninist ideology with parliamentary democracy was upheld more or less uncontested until the rise of the radicalized Maoists. With their ascendancy, the Maoists assumed the mantle of 'true' Marxist-Leninist-Maoist party while deriding the mother party for their 'retrogressive' and 'reactionary' follies.

Given the rise of the Maoists and their backlash against the CPN (UML) in the form of violence and murder, there emerged counter criticisms against the 'fascist' and 'dictatorial' tendencies of the Maoists from within the CPN (UML) as well. Spokesperson Pradip Nepal (2003) criticizes the Maoists for launching a war based on forty demands that could have been solved constitutionally and without violence. Deriding the 'opportunism' within the Maoists, he also claims that the war was based on 'mistaken theoretical (ideological) concepts' and that the Maoists represent an 'ideological deviation'. He elaborates,

The Maoists take it for granted that Marxism and Leninism are 'old' and inadequate and cannot provide their guiding principles. They tend to think Maoism to be the supreme form.... In this political journey, the Maoist party has taken the strange act of universalization of the Prachanda Path, rejecting Marxism-Leninism, leaving worldly truth and considering a few years' experience as universal fact.... The Maoist Party has taken to the strange practice of ignoring the international experience of the communist movement as material, together with the objective condition of the nation and its proper use as regards to the specific situation. (Nepal 2003: 418)

As will be discussed later, Pradip Nepal was not the only one to chastise the Nepali Maoists for forsaking Marxism-Leninism for Maoism and consequently highlighting the 'falseness' of the CPN (M)'s ideology. He also objects to the Maoist reading of class structure 'based on the blind imitation of the norms and values provided by Mao Tse Tung (sic), more than 60 years ago in China's history' (ibid: 419). Such a misreading, he claims, fails to take into account societal transformations over the past decade. How, then, does the CPN (UML) interpret Marxism-Leninism or class structure or socialism? These questions remain unanswered. Rather, more than elucidating his party's Marxist-Leninist perspectives, Pradip Nepal's paper reveals the UML's entrenchment within multiparty democracy. He praises international developments in human rights, exhibits faith in the power of the electorate and of competitive democracy and scorns political violence in the name of Maoism. Similarly, his interpretations of 'development' differ from Marxist versions that refer to the 'stages of development'. Pradip Nepal's concept of 'development' is very similar to those espoused by other parliamentary parties that speak of the 'development of the economy' on the basis of modernized agriculture, land

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<sup>76</sup> This, however, is not the isolated fate of Marxism in Nepal. As discussed by Desai, it has precedence in the Second International, which, after the end of the First World War, agreed to a form of socialism that Desai calls 'Socialism *within* Capitalism' or a 'humanized Capitalism' that attempted to moderate the ills of capitalism by moving towards a welfare state (Desai 2002: 144).

reforms and industrialization (ibid: 436–437). A similar trend was also visible during the nine-month government led by CPN (UML) in 1994–1995, which did not deviate from the previous Nepali Congress-led government in terms of national priorities and ‘development’ goals, all of which point to the party’s entrenchment in parliamentary democracy.

## **6.2 Lack of development as among the causes of the Maoist war**

The factors responsible for Nepal’s decade-long conflict can be divided into social, political and economic categories (Thapa with Sijapati 2003). Falling within the social factor is a Hindu kingdom propped upon patriarchy and historically antagonistic towards marginalized sections of society such as women and ethnic minorities even with the reinstatement of democracy in 1990 (e.g., Thapa with Sijapati 2003; de Sales 2003[2000]; Gautam et al. 2001; Comrade Parvati 2003; Lawoti 2010; Lawoti and Hagen 2013; Bhattachan 2013; Lecomte Tilouine 2013). The power struggle between and within political parties who were occupied with short-term goals and were unwilling to seek political solutions but relied on repression as a means of ‘taming’ the Maoists is the political factor behind the rise of the party. Contributing this is the foundational work done since the 1950s by stalwarts, the extremist communists, in what would later become Maoist strongholds in western Nepal (Shaha 2003[1996]; Shrestha 2003[1997]; Thapa and Sijapati 2003; Gersony 2003; Cailmail 2013).

Apart from these social and political factors, the less than satisfactory impacts of four decades of development on Nepali economy has also been examined (Thapa and Sijapati 2003; Gersony 2003), some of which originated from the Maoists themselves (Bhattarai 2003a, 2003b). This section discusses how economic issues were articulated by the Maoists in the party’s early pamphlets and in a few randomly selected secondary sources derived from ethnographic studies during the war. In these, development and underdevelopment do not appear prominently in contrast to the more than abundant use of catchy terms such as oppression and exploitation as well as revolution, class struggle, and Nepal’s ‘semi-feudal’ status. This is not to mean the complete absence of the two terms but their relatively sparse use in propaganda literature. Two leaflets where the concept of development appears briefly are the forty-point demands and a leaflet distributed immediately upon the launch of the war.

A list of forty demands submitted by Maoist leader Baburam Bhattarai to prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba’s coalition government on February 4, 1996, is remembered as among the preliminary steps of the war. Describing Nepal as the second poorest in the world, this list dwells on unemployment, foreign loans, trade deficit, ‘foreign and Indian imperialism’ and privatization and liberalization as the handmaiden of Nepal’s plight. It then rattles out forty demands slotted under three categories: nationality, democracy and livelihood.

Of interest are demand nos. 7 and 9 as well as most of the demands in the third category concerning ‘livelihood’, which spell out Nepal’s various deficiencies without mentioning the word development. Most of these demands under ‘livelihood’ call upon the government’s attention to issues such as land redistribution, agricultural loans, health, education, roads, drinking water, and industries, including cottage industries. On the other hand, demand no. 7 states, ‘an appropriate customs policy should be devised and implemented so that economic development helps the nation become self-reliant’ and demand no. 9 speaks of the need to stop ‘the invasion of colonial and imperial elements in the name of NGOs and INGOs’. Demand nos. 7 and 9 fall under nationalism. Hence, the only time development is used here is in conjunction with the economy.

Another leaflet titled ‘March Along the Path of People’s War to Smash the Reactionary State and Establish a New Democratic State’ was also distributed immediately upon the initiation of the war. Unlike the 40-Point Demand, this leaflet carries two distinct uses of development, one that associates



development with economic growth and the other that is more common to the Left vocabulary. It begins with the following question,

Today Nepalese society is in a state of grave crisis, economically, politically and culturally. Where has the present regime, which has been harping on about development and construction for the last 50 years, landed Nepal economically? It has landed Nepal in the position of second poorest country in the world after Ethiopia. (Karki and Seddon 2003: 187)

It holds that the alliance between a 'reactionary state' and the 'comprador and bureaucratic capitalists' is responsible for the above misfortune. The solution lies, it claims, in 'smashing this reactionary state and establishing a New Democratic state'. Towards the end, it claims that the path to a New Democratic state 'will unfold by making uses of all forms of struggle in keeping with the historical stage of development of Nepal...' (ibid: 192). Thus, the leaflet begins by problematizing the lack of economic growth and ends by claiming that the historical 'stage of development' of Nepal will determine the nature of the solution. This twofold use of development does not surface in subsequent propaganda such as the first-, second- and third-year reviews of the 'People's War' or in interviews of party leaders during the war. These mostly discuss the CPN (M)'s organizational strength, militarization, its effect on the larger philosophy of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, its military encounters with the state army and its criticism of the 'revisionists' and the 'reactionaries'. As the later sections will discuss, the reference to development in terms of evolutionary stages of growth, typical to the Marxists, is upheld by the Nepali Maoists throughout the war. But so is the propensity for popular notions of development as planned economic growth.

In addition to Maoist propaganda, the following excerpts taken from two separate fieldworks conducted among Maoist cadres in the hinterlands discuss the politico-economic factors for the war. The following statement is from one village leader of the CPN (M) interviewed by Li Onesto in 1999. The interviewee explains his reason for joining the party in the following words,

After 1990 the multi-party system was instituted and the people thought they would now have a better life and opportunities. But this didn't happen and the gap between the haves and the have-nots only got bigger. There was a great crisis in the country, with Nepal being the second poorest nation in the world. This is one reason I was attracted to the revolution and saw the need for class struggle in order to achieve equality. Another reason is that I saw that all the political leaders in the government had become corrupted and did not represent the people. (quoted in Li Onesto 2006: 19)

The same writer encounters B.K. and K.C., both village leaders of the CPN (M) in Gorkha district, who speak of pro-poor, anti-oppressive tactics of the party in the following two excerpts,

One contradiction the peasants face is with small agricultural banks. They have to pay high interest on loans, and many times the bank ends up taking their land away and they become landless. To solve this problem we told the peasants not to pay the bank for their loans. We attacked one bank and destroyed all the loan documents, so the peasants were freed from their loans. A second contradiction is between peasants and landlords. We dealt with this by implementing a policy of land to the tiller. Land was seized and distributed to the peasants. The third contradiction faced by the peasants is with individual usurers, who give loans with high interest. This problem was solved by destroying documents for these loans. (ibid: 74)

On February 13, 1996 at 3:45 pm, we succeeded in raiding an agricultural bank, targeting it as a symbol of imperialism. This was a new experience for us as we had no practice in armed struggle before this. The bank is run by the government and involved in carrying out IMF (International Monetary Fund) and World Bank loans and policies. We took all the documents there and burned them. (ibid: 77)

Among Shneiderman and Turin's interviews among the marginalized Thangmi ethnic community of Dolakha between 1998 and 2001, the following two extracts are informative. According to their informant,

In VDCs where they have established *ādhār ilākās*, the Maoists have stated that development offices with foreign connections cannot stay. This is not because they are explicitly against development, but rather because they have seen how corrupt most of these organizations are. Usually only fifty percent or less of their money actually goes towards development, the rest goes into people's pockets. The Maoists say that if they saw one hundred percent of the funds going directly to local development, they would consider letting the officer stay.

Last week on 8 Saun 2058 v.s. (23 July 2001), the Maoists declared their government....One of our hopes is that if the Maoists come to power, development will start originating in the villages instead of having to be brought in from outside. If the new Maoist government succeeds, this could be one benefit. The people have already lost faith in all political parties: each one has made promises and failed. People are willing to give the Maoist government a chance. They are the only ones who have not yet let us down. (Shneiderman and Turin 2004: 100–101)

Hence, while grievances in the form of economic inequality contributed to the support for the Maoists, colloquial references to these were not specifically in terms of development and underdevelopment. Where development is used, it is in connection with foreign-aided projects which, although not articulated as such in these excerpts, are linked to development as planned, interventionist programs and not to Marxist evolutionary stages. There is a preponderance of popular definitions of development over the less familiar Marxist interpretation even among the Maoist cadres in the early years of the war. The rest of the chapter will discuss how the CPN (M) attempted to reverse this trend by articulating Nepal's problems through the notion of underdevelopment.

### 6.3 Redefining development as underdevelopment

Ideologue and senior member of the politbureau of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), Baburam Bhattarai, asks, 'What is the 'prime mover' in social development?' (Bhattarai 2003a: 60). In other words, what is it that keeps some societies in regression while others advance? In asking this question, Bhattarai deviates from his fellow Maoist cadres, quoted in the previous section, that associate development with foreign-aided 'projects'. Bhattarai clarifies that his notion of development aligns with classical Marxism that regards it as a 'stage' in the progressive transformation of society and not one that subscribe to 'Anglo-Saxon neo classicists' interpretations that tie the idea to economic growth. According to Bhattarai, development is a process rather than the output.

Bhattarai's *problematique*, however, is not development, but underdevelopment, which he defines as the 'distortion introduced in the sectoral and spatial dimensions of the social economy' (ibid: 3), more of which will be discussed below. Referring to Marx's assessment of the 'Asiatic' societies of India, China and Persia, Bhattarai claims that underdevelopment stems from the contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production, a resolution of which will lead to a change in class structure and thus to the 'development' of the next stage in the progressive transformation of society.

Although Marx never spoke in terms of 'underdevelopment', the term gained prominence in Marxist derivatives. Bhattarai dismisses the dependency school for emphasizing the exogenous factor for underdevelopment. However, his assessment of the recent development within the classical Marxists is not free from criticism either. According to Bhattarai, the classical Marxist emphasis on the uneven development of the modes of production is true to a certain extent but is also riddled with the fallacies such as

Assuming a deterministic role to the exogenous impulses and assuming transfer value as 'cause' of underdevelopment, etc., and a number of other methodological discrepancies. Also, whereas the flavor of economic determinism in it is explicit, it also smacks of a form of 'dualism' in assuming non-capitalist modes as not having their own laws of motion. Concomitant with its excessive economism, the model also fails to tackle the role of class formation in development/underdevelopment in a satisfactory manner. (ibid: 11)

Additionally, Bhattarai claims that Marxist literature on 'underdevelopment' is limited either to regions that were under colonial subjugation or to those that, post colonialism, contribute significantly to capitalist expansion. He claims that the entire corpus is inadequate in understanding the causes of underdevelopment of countries such as Nepal that was not part of the above conditions. He writes of the need to develop a new approach to studying such societies and regions based on the 'historico-materialist method of scientific enquiry' that studies the 'phenomenon of development/underdevelopment' in 'semi-colonial/dependent societies' (ibid: 13). He then proposes such an approach.

According to Bhattarai's 'new' approach of historical materialism, social development is a 'constant process triggered by the contradictions between forces and relations of production in the given mode of production' and in which development and underdevelopment are 'antithetical to each other' and in which

'development' within a given social formation would be full realization of productive potentials of the society or transition to higher social formation, 'underdevelopment' would be the opposite condition of non-realization of full potential of development and/or blockage to transition to higher formations. (ibid: 13)

This proposition does not deviate significantly from classical Marxism, which follows Marx's belief in the historically progressive role of capitalism. Next, he defines 'mode of production' as the 'articulated combination of all or major ensembles of relations and forces of production'. He adds that the transitions between modes of production are not linear but 'a lengthy and discontinuous process, so that at a time there maybe more than one mode of production but under the hegemony of one mode and in a dichotomous relation of unity-struggle-transformation' (ibid: 13). Here too, his approach is similar to those prevalent among the Marxist revivalists in the 1960s and 1970s. Bhattarai also states that the extent to which pre-capitalist economy is drawn into the ever-expanding drive of capitalism is determined by the 'historical stage of development of capital and the mode of articulation with the pre-capitalist economy, i.e. whether mercantile, industrial or financial and also the internal structure of the pre-capitalist economy' (ibid: 13–14). Although he is not explicit here, elsewhere, Bhattarai and his party have asserted Nepal's 'semi-feudal', 'semi-colonial' nature. How this 'stage of development' links with mercantile, industrial or finance capital is not elaborated.

Thus, while embedded in classical Marxism, what is perhaps new in Bhattarai's approach is a combination of 'endogenous' and 'exogenous' causes of underdevelopment, with emphasis on empirical evidence. Bhattarai also adjuncts his contributions to Marxist epistemology by focusing on the spatial dimensions of underdevelopment or the 'notion of physical space/nature in social science, relations between space and society and identification of the spatial organization of underdevelopment' (ibid: 17)<sup>77</sup>. Based on his assessment of agriculture, industry, trade and finance, Bhattarai argues that there exists 'spatial unevenness in development in Nepal' in aspects such as location of industries, flow

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<sup>77</sup> In his book, Bhattarai divides Nepal into twelve territorial zones based on its 'physico-hydrographics'. Of these the physical zones comprise of the Tarai, inner Tarai, hill and mountains that are traversed by the 'hydrographics' of the Kosi, Gandaki and Karnali rivers (ibid: 31). To this is added the Kathmandu valley, thus making a total of thirteen zones.

of market commodities, marketing, spatial distribution of production and consumption, the location of financial or bank capital and of urbanization and settlements. He concludes that the spatial concentrations of these in Kathmandu and in the Tarai plains bordering India contribute to the marginalization of the hinterlands. His contribution to the development/underdevelopment discourse of Nepal lies in empirically demonstrating that Kathmandu and certain pockets in the Tarai are more 'developed' in terms of the productive forces while the majority of the country stagnates in underdevelopment because of its geography, its 'spatial' character.

To go back to the question Bhattarai posed in the beginning: 'what is the "prime mover" in social development?', his answer is that a society's development into the next progressive stage is conditioned on internal as well as external factors which are not merely economic but involve a 'socio-spatial' process, with the social leading the spatial (ibid: 26), adding that 'the spatial structure of a particular social formation may be located in the production and reproduction logic of the given formation' (ibid: 494). However, more than elaborating what this 'production and reproduction logic' entails or how it affects the spatial structure, his focus is directed towards demonstrating the uneven territorial concentration of productive forces in Nepal. If, as the book claims, 'backward and retrograde' relations of production in land holdings and agriculture are responsible for Nepal's feudal status, what prevents this 'feudal' mode of production from ascending into a more developed stage? Additionally, what prevents the confrontations between the forces of production and the relations of production in Nepal? These questions remain unanswered.

In terms of the concept of development, the book appears semantically consistent in that he adheres to Marxist semantics that associate it with evolutionary 'stages' of a society's growth while avoiding popular notions of development as economic growth. However, his second paper (Bhattarai 2003b) presents a different case.

#### **6.4 The return to 'economic development'**

Bhattarai (2003b) initially retains his Marxist readings but eventually catapults towards popular (or 'comprador bureaucratic' as he would call it) versions that tie development to interventionist economic goals. This non-Marxist adjunct regards 'economic development' as part of 'a transitional capitalist system' on the journey to a 'higher form of socialist system' (Bhattarai 2003b: 164). In other words, Bhattarai ties 'economic development' through capitalism to an eventual utopian socialism under the leadership of the CPN (M)'s New Democratic system.

According to Bhattarai, societies develop by 'the motion generated by its own inner contradictions', but sometimes an intervention is helpful in speeding up the process (ibid: 119). The 'People's War' is such an intervention aimed at breaking Nepal's internal and external fetters and marching towards an 'inward looking and self-reliant development policy'. He claims that such a policy will revolutionize the relations of production by 'confiscating' the means of production, particularly land and capital from the feudal and comprador capitalist and bureaucratic class and handing these over to the 'progressive masses', after which the relations of production will be molded into capitalist relations as a transitional step towards the ultimate goal to socialism (ibid: 155). Such an 'inward looking' and 'self-reliant development' relies upon an indigenous 'economic development policy' that promotes 'its own natural resources, capital, labor, technology and markets' while, to a certain extent, maintaining cross-border economic ties and the flow of modern science and technology (ibid: 156).

These views on the 'economic development policy' also refer to 'planned development', 'balanced development', 'revolutionary land reform' and 'national industrialization' – phrases that are avoided in Bhattarai's work discussed above. Bhattarai emphasizes that planned development does not refer to the 'negative' experiences of the Soviet Union but to 'the creation of a genuine mass-oriented and efficient

economy functioning under the guidance of a centralized leadership but with decentralized initiative and management’ such as prevalent in Mao’s China (ibid: 157). Similarly, balanced development refers to congruence between different economic sectors and geographies while his outline for land reform revives the old adage of ‘land to the tiller’ with Maoist addendums such as the ‘scientific and revolutionary’ nature of their program (ibid: 159). His proposal for industrialization is state centric, complemented by a private sector that is active in small and medium trade and industry.

The ideas enshrined in Bhattarai’s proposal for ‘economic development’ have been articulated by previous regimes in the very same phrases. Balanced development, planned development, industrial development, etc., have been the elements of *bikās* since the 1950s. What Bhattarai does is to Marx-ize ‘economic development’ such that it becomes a platform for the transition to the next *stage of development* – a ‘transitional capitalist system’ and not to imperialist capitalism (ibid: 164). During the war period, the CPN (M) went to violent extremes to point out the difference between its Marx-ized ‘economic development’ and that of the ‘regressive, reactionary’ regime’s version of ‘economic development’ as the foreign aided agenda of ‘imperialist expansion’, that vile avatar of capitalism and of ‘underdevelopment’ in Nepal.

Although this second avatar is not discussed in the above paper, the CPN (M)’s stance against foreign-aided development during the course of the war reveals their position. Project offices, logistic supplies and commodities associated with certain donors that fell under their ‘imperialist’ rubric became unfortunate targets of destruction during the war and something the Maoists were unapologetic about. According to one writer, the Maoists claimed that aid agencies are pseudo-developmental agencies that churn out jobs ‘to the relatives of Nepali Congress, the UML and other influential people’ (quoted in Kattel 2003: 66.). Writing about Maoist indifference to long-term consequence of the vandalism of the Gulmi-Arghakanchi Rural Development Project (GARDEP) run jointly by the Nepali government and the European Union in May 2001, this writer states,

Despite repeated requests and warnings by the project staff that the project would be cancelled if they burned the vehicle, the Maoists did not stop, as it was their Party decision to cancel the project. Following this the GARDEP has decided to suspend its projects. The fear the incident has generated has pushed two promising water supply schemes – the Nuwakot Khilji Asurkot Project and the Bangla-Sandhikharka Project – which were supposed to set up 200 taps and 100 taps respectively benefiting about 12,000 households, into the doldrums. (ibid)

These and many other incidents of destruction and expulsion of projects deemed corrupt by the Maoist were regular news during the war, along with sporadic reports of Maoists being tolerant towards organizations they deemed genuine.<sup>78</sup> According to a study conducted in Maoist-affected mid-western regions, the Maoists targeted and destroyed administrative offices which, in villages and remote areas, stand as symbols of the government. They also destroyed concrete bridges, telecommunication towers and airport facilities, making communication in already remote and inaccessible places difficult. However, the report states that many suspension bridges were disabled but not destroyed, apparently a strategic ploy to make these bridges unfit for the army with its heavy machinery but usable enough for villagers to move about. Similarly, the Jimrhuk electricity plant in Pyuthan district built with Norwegian Government aid was destroyed. Obstruction to road constructions and to projects providing infrastructure and technical assistance, and programs on forestry and local governance, etc., were some others that were at the receiving end of Maoist vengeance. The same report mentions NGO personnel and NGOs forced to cough up 5 percent and 2-10 percent respectively as taxes to the Maoists if they

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<sup>78</sup> See Shneiderman and Turin (2004: 79–111).

desired to continue functioning in these areas. Quoting from the Nepal Conflict Assessment, it states, 'according to police records 18 offices of international donor agencies have been attacked between 1996 and 2000. There have been numerous other incidents, including threatening letters and anti-NGO processions, aimed at intimidating agencies and their field staff. One suspects there is an under-reporting of incidents because of the sensitivity of such information' (GerSONY 2003: 64).

Hence, for the CPN (M), planned, interventionist, 'economic development' was a convoluted concept that led either to progress or to regress depending on who was charting the path. This leads to the parallel concept of *pragati*, or progress, that was the CPN (M)'s chosen vocabulary to denote the future. As will be discussed next, in Bhattarai's writings, it is progress, and not development, that represents the pinnacle, and in this the party identifies with the practices of its predecessors who, since the 1950s, preferred to align with *pragati* and *pragatiśīl* (or progress and progressive) as against the then emerging practice of referring to development and *bikās* as the summation of sociopolitical and economic goals and achievements.

## 6.5 Progress

Bhattarai's (2005) compilation of essays and interviews during the course of the war contains elementary deliberations on the nature of societal development as well as tentative outlines of the party's future program. What is immediately visible in this later work is the choice of terminology used to describe the future. It is 'progress', and not development, that represents a forward momentum. Three elements stand most notably in his definition of progress. The first is the repetitious references to the future. The second is the opposition between progress and retrogression, which links to the third element of how the CPN (M) defines it in opposition to the democratic parties and monarchy.

According to Bhattarai, the 'progress' of Nepal lies in realizing the republican, democratic, communist ideal championed by his party and in freeing the country from the shackles of monarchy. This promise that progress will be found at the end of the Maoist revolution with the creation of a 'new Nepal' reverberates with the promises made many decades earlier that linked democracy with *bikās*. However, Bhattarai argues that democracy and development became 'retrogressive' companions and hence his party plunged into a warpath aimed at overhauling 'pseudo' democracy and 'pseudo' development with republicanism and progress. It is noteworthy that, as with *bikās*, the Maoists' notion of progress was an ambiguous future-oriented ideal that spoke of many possibilities but could not chart this promising future. The CPN (M)'s progress is a future-oriented word that functioned in the same manner as *bikās*. The only difference between the two is that while *bikās* had a wider appeal (during the war, *bikās* continued to be the dominant political concept for most political parties apart from the underground Maoists), *pragati* was limited to the communist association it had acquired many decades earlier.

The second element in the CPN (M)'s definition of progress is the reference to the 'dialectical' opposition between progress and retrogression. Just as underdevelopment was the antithesis of development (*bikās* and *a-bikās* in Nepali), retrogression was the other of progress. This leads to the third aspect of the definition. For the CPN (M), all political parties, individuals and ideologies that do not subscribe to its worldview are retrogressive. Even within the many branched communists, there are some more retrogressive than others. Thus, for Bhattarai and his party, the competing branches across Nepal's communist spectrum belong to differing intensities of retrogression, with the CPN (M) being the only true progressive political party.

Bhattarai refers to the triangular distribution of power between the 'feudal monarchists', 'bourgeois parliamentarians' and the 'revolutionary democrats', which, in the past decade, collapsed into two camps. The alignment between the monarch and the bourgeoisie parliamentarians, the latter tending to 'appease the monarchy and share the crumbs of power', falls on one side and the 'revolutionary

democrats’ on the other. The ‘retrogressive’ alliance between the parliamentarians and the monarchy/monarchists was, according to Bhattarai, an impediment to progress since it prevented political parties in power to muster the will to ‘cut the roots of feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism’ and to introduce radical reforms (Bhattarai 2005: 78–79).

In terms of progress, this triangle helps reveal the CPN (M)’s version of who the genuine carrier of progress in Nepal is. After reducing the role of the ‘feudal monarchists’ and the ‘bourgeois parliamentarians’ to retrogressive forces, what remains is the ‘revolutionary democrats’ or those affiliated to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, the true representatives of progress. Bhattarai confines progress to Marxism and limits it to a particular world view – that of the party’s political ideology. In this sense, the CPN (M)’s definition of progress is not the same as that of development, the latter being ambiguous, inconsistent and not limited to a particular political ideology.

## 6.6 Critiquing the Maoists

Chastising the various communist splinters, the CPN (M) claimed to be the true inheritor of a Marxist legacy in Nepal. This claim was further emboldened by the growing success of the ‘People’s War’; the radicalization of entire swaths of rural Nepal; the international attention and awe it garnered as well as the support from the international communist organization, the Revolutionary International Movement, which, in the 1990s and 2000s, regarded the CPN (M) as the new vanguard for a proletariat revolution. During the war, this claim was seldom subject to critique since the CPN (M) was infamous for its atrocities towards those that criticized it. While political alternatives to the CPN (M)’s Marxism have been in existence among rival communist parties, studies discussing the ‘peripherilization’ or the ‘underdevelopment’ of Nepal were also in existence, such as in the writings of Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (1980), Mikesell (1999) and Mishra (1987), most of which the Maoists choose to ignore. Fortunately, the end of the war witnessed the CPN (M)’s willingness to hold dialogues with the non-Maoist Marxists in keeping with the belief that Marxism is a ‘dynamic science’ (*gatiśīl bigyān*) (Bhattarai 2009) and is therefore subject to revision. The Maoist journal *Rāto Jhilko* was the result of such an attempt.

This section will look at neo-Marxist, non-Maoist readings of Nepali political economy, particularly in two papers by the Marxist scholar Chaitanya Mishra. Since Mishra has researched both the pre- and the post-‘People’s War’ Nepal, his writings provide a spectrum through which the transitions within Marxist scholarship can be understood. Additionally, Mishra was the first to engage with the CPN (M)’s interpretations of Marxist ideology immediately after the war when such ideological dialogue was largely absent. This section will examine Mishra’s *Development and Underdevelopment: A Preliminary Sociological Perspective* (1987), where he charts the history of the ‘underdevelopment’ of Nepal and his reply to Baburam Bhattarai’s call for a dialogue in *Kun Itihās Kun Mārksvād Ra Kun Krānti* (2009) [Which History, Which Marxism and Which Revolution?]. The aim is firstly to examine Mishra’s readings of development and underdevelopment as an alternative to the CPN (M)’s version, secondly to discuss his criticism of the CPN (M)’s ‘misreading’ as well as his own reinterpretations of Marxism.

Mishra’s critique of development or his prognosis of ‘underdevelopment’ is among the earliest in a discourse that was otherwise inundated with beliefs in the benevolence of development.<sup>79</sup> The confidence towards development was even visible among the left-aligned parties whose preferred

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<sup>79</sup> The proceedings of a 1983 seminar *Foreign Aid and Development in Nepal* held by the Institute for Development also contains some of the earliest deliberations and efforts to take stock of ‘development’ in Nepal, which, incidentally, contains a paper Mishra co-authored with Pitambar Sharma, details of which are discussed in chapter one, page 7.

choice for censor was not ‘underdevelopment’ but ‘reactionary’ or ‘retrogressive’. Although underdevelopment was used in the late 1950s to refer to Nepal’s place in the process towards development, it gradually declined following the enthusiasm and preference for development. It was through writing such as Mishra’s that ‘underdevelopment’ re-entered the discourse in its Marxist avatar.

Mishra defines underdevelopment as the historical process that embedded Nepal into the global capitalist economy and resulted in the alienation of ‘indigenous means of subsistence production’ as well as resulted in the emergence of a ‘comprador bourgeoisie’ whose capitalist interests did not enrich the nation but only other likeminded bourgeoisie (Mishra 1987: 49). He traces the beginnings of Nepal’s peripheralization to the Rana period from 1885 to 1949. Further, he states that the ‘state alliance’ between comprador commercial bourgeoisie and large landlords are the primary reason for Nepal’s underdevelopment. Similarly, he argues that the national industrial bourgeoisie, a weak force in the face of competitions from neighboring India and China, is unable to counter the comprador bourgeoisie, and neither are the local communities a strong force since they are increasingly disembedded through infiltrations of capitalism and the pull of emigration. These, Mishra claims, are the contributing factors in the ‘development of underdevelopment’ (ibid: 71–72). The paper concludes by prescribing two options: either an inward-looking national bourgeoisie or a socialized economy. In both cases, the prerequisite he lays out is a ‘national boundedness, a well-defined “national domain”’ in which nationalism and development are intertwined (ibid: 78). Although Mishra discards this prescriptive conclusion in his later works, what is important to note here is that unlike Bhattarai, who assigns ‘endogenous’, sectoral-spatial unevenness as the cause of Nepal’s underdevelopment, Mishra believes in ‘exogenous’ causes.

The endogenous versus exogenous debate is carried over in Mishra’s (2009) critique of Baburam Bhattarai’s paper *Ājako Mārksvād* (Marxism Today). He criticized the Maoists for emphasizing Nepal’s internal confrontations to the complete neglect of external circumstances. Mishra argues that in the pull and push of endogenous and exogenous factors, Nepal’s underdevelopment is predominantly the ramifications of global capitalism and not the result of isolated, Nepal-specific factors (Mishra 2009: 28–29). Accompanying this is Mishra’s critique of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology that the CPN (M) claims to be its basis. Before discussing Mishra’s critique at length, however, it will be useful to summarize the main argument of Baburam Bhattarai’s *Ājako Mārksvād*.

As discussed at the outset, the end of the ‘People’s War’ was the beginning of internal rifts within the CPN (M). It is perhaps as a consequence of the fragile post-war period that sections within the party began rethinking and revising Marxism in the Nepali context. Baburam Bhattarai’s paper is a part of this revisionism. It is Bhattarai’s attempt to inaugurate a dialogue within and among the Nepal’s communists.

Bhattarai claims that the CPN (M), in keeping with the dynamism inherent in Marxism, has been evolving ever since its establishment, with the ‘Prachanda Path’, a ‘synthesized’ and Nepal-specific political line named after the party’s chairman Pushpa Kamal Dha alias Prachanda, being the finest example. ‘Prachanda Path’ was an ‘enrichment’ of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, ‘a new example of creative Marxism, opposed to both the right revisionists and sectarian dogmatists’. It came with a caveat – ‘Prachanda Path’ was not a ‘thought’, although it was more than a general party line.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> An interview published in RIM ‘A World to Win’, No. 27, 2001, and republished in Karki and Seddon (2003: 276). This admission reflects the party’s submission to Mao’s claims. Mao rooted for the universality of Marxist-Leninist ideology, which he argued was subject to revisions and further developments but only at the level of ‘thought’ and not at the ideation. Simultaneously, Mao claimed to have contributed to the ‘practical theory’ and not to ‘pure theory’ that was exclusive to the



The Nepal-specific ‘synthesis’ that is repeatedly asserted in the fifty-five-page document *Great Leap Forward* is not a synthesis of ideology but a description of the confrontations faced by the party from individual members and the manner in which the party leadership battled out such confrontations. The hesitation to name this ‘synthesis’ a contribution to Marxist ‘thought’ becomes evident when it does not engage with ideas but is occupied with drawing corollaries between Lenin and Mao’s detractors and similar instances within the party. How exactly does the document contribute to global Marxism-Leninism-Maoism ideology is not discussed. If an account of the party’s treatment of ‘rightist revision and sectarian dogmatism’ is expected to contribute to the international communist movement, how can Nepali particularities be generalized for communists in other parts of the globe? Additionally, ‘Prachanda Path’ was conceived at a time when the party was locked in a civil war. It was not formulated after a victory. Therefore, the claim that ‘Prachanda Path’ was a unique exposition of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism based on the particularities of Nepal appears premature.

Nevertheless, Bhattarai claims that the ‘dynamism’ of ‘Prachanda Path’ was augmented by developments in post-war, post-monarchial Nepal such as the central committee’s push in v.s. 2060 (2004) for an ‘original’ (*maulik*) decision favoring the possibility of combining competitive multiparty politics with long-term socialist goals (Bhattarai 2009: 7). He clarifies that such an arrangement is only temporary and in keeping with the transitional period. It is, he claims, a way of piercing and gradually defeating the old, bourgeoisie system which, although weakened, continued to exist in spite of the abolition of monarchy. To these, he adds that in the current globalized context, communist movements in isolated pockets of the globe will not be as effective as a larger and collective communist revolution. With these ‘*maulik*’ propositions laid down, the question that is foremost in Bhattarai’s mind is this: ‘Has the revolutionary use (of Marxism) by the Maoists been a contribution to or the distortion of Marxism’ (ibid: 7)? Bhattarai answers in the affirmative. The same question when answered by Mishra (2009) is negative.

Mishra condemns the CPN (M) leader for falsely assigning the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist triad an uninterrupted, uncontested sequence. It fails to recognize longstanding, historical differences between the three as well as the ‘distortions’ introduced into Marx’s original propositions by Lenin and Mao. Substantiating recent attempts to re-read Marx (for example, Desai 2002) Mishra argues that although capitalism has its drawbacks, Marx never advocated its imminent death. Rather, capitalism was, in the writings of Marx, progressive than its predecessors. It was Lenin who amplified the negative of capitalism, who muted the progressiveness inherent in it and advocated the possibility of a leap into socialism. Such a leap, Mishra claims, is an attack on Marx’s work. It is a leap over an entire historical period and over dialectical materialism, since Marx clearly stated that

No social order ever disappeared before all the productive forces for which there is room in it have been developed; and new higher relations of production never appear before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old society itself. Therefore, mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve; since looking at the matter more closely, we will always find that the task itself arises only when material conditions necessary for its solution already exist, or are at least in the process of formation. (Marx quoted in Desai 2002: 44)

Mishra argues that Lenin and Mao stepped upon this core tenant and hurtled socialism upon an unprepared society. His ire stems from Baburam Bhattarai’s reading of such a stepping over as unproblematic and a logical development of Marxism. Mishra argues that Marx never wrote nor

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realm of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The Nepali Maoists, however, avoid claiming ‘theoretical’ contributions. Rather, the ‘Prachanda Path’ is, as argued by the chairman, a fusion of international and Nepali Marxist achievements.

discussed a leap being possible or leading successfully to socialism or to the end of class-based society. Neither did Marx advocate a centralized state or a state-led plan to depose the market. Mishra also claims that there are inconsistencies in Bhattarai's paper where, on the one hand, Bhattarai claims to inherit such a Leninist-Maoist interpretation while on the other he tends to falter between capitalism as necessarily progressive and capitalism as a compromise with the bourgeoisie. Mishra concludes by suggesting that the CPN (M) leader clarify his views on Nepal's prospects for industrial capitalism (Mishra 2009: 33).

Along with these refutations, Mishra acknowledges a revision in his own earlier belief where he had prescribed the need to delink from the capitalist process in order that Nepal free itself from underdevelopment. He argues that the only way forward is for Nepal to recognize and take advantage of the ascendance of capitalism in India and China instead of getting mired by indecisive rhetoric. In this regard, he concurs with Bhattarai's proposition for Marxist movements that are expansive rather than confined within national boundaries.

What is interesting for this chapter is Mishra's critique of the *maulik*, or original, Nepal-specific amendment to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism that Bhattarai claims to be CPN (M)'s core achievement. According to Bhattarai, the decision of the central committee meet of 2004 was a *maulik* development, in which it was proposed that 'multiparty competitive politics should be established even within constitutionally endowed socialist systems' (Bhattarai 2009: 7). According to Mishra, (and Mikesell 1999) the practice of combining socialist goals and multiparty competitive politics was first recommended by the CPN (UML) leader Madan Bhandari. This, however, was not a Nepal-specific alteration but had precedence in the German Social Democratic Party since the early 1900s (Desai 2002) and therefore falsifies Bhattarai's *maulik* claims. Although Mishra's comments on Bhattarai's paper does not say so explicitly, elsewhere he criticizes the transformation of gun-bearing guerillas into participants in electoral politics. He elaborates this in a recent lecture,

The CPN-M [CPN (M)] has been transforming. The splitting off of two separate hardline groups seems to imply that the 'mainline' CPN-M has been shedding the political programme of 'new democracy'. The successive CPN-M central committee meeting and party convention of August 2013 and December 2013 do seem to substantiate this transformation. Essentially the documents (CPN-M 2013a: 773, 2013b: 46–49), which are caught between simultaneously legitimizing both a radical past and not-so-radical a future – and, thus obliged to perform a political Houdini act – would seem to claim that specific components of new democracy have already been achieved while aiming 'to eventually attain socialism by currently pursuing capitalism'. (Mishra 2015: 65–66)

Such a strategy negated the Leninist-Maoist 'leap' that was promoted in the 'Prachanda Path'. Simultaneously, it required the party to configure to capitalism as the immediate future. Such a maneuver was in stark opposition to their anti-capitalist stance during the war. In deciding to join mainstream politics, the CPN (M) had to shed extremism in practice and in vocabulary. While taming its extremist tendencies was a gradual, grudging process, the party was quick in adopting the political language that it had derided as 'bourgeoisie' not too long ago. As discussed earlier, for the Maoists, development carried economic as well as non-economic, Marxist connotations. Although 'economic development' was synonymous with capitalist economy and was established within 'bourgeoisie' vocabulary since the 1990s, for the Maoists 'economic development' had meant capitalism only under conditions that it led to socialism as directed by the party's New Democratic system. The suspension of New Democracy after 2006 meant that economic development as laid out by the 'comprador bureaucratic classes' appeared to be the only form of development that was available. In the changed context, the CPN (M) softened the capitalist versus socialist interpretations while adhering to 'economic development' and more generally to development. Additionally, it abandoned the interpretation of development as 'stages of development'. How was the CPN (M) able to make the transition? How was

it able to switch from its earlier aversion of ‘bourgeoisie development’ as an ‘agent of imperialism’ towards capitalism as the next best step to socialism? It was able to do so partly through flexible, ambiguous political concepts. This switch is possible because, as John Stuart Mill said, ‘mankind have [sic] many ideas, and but few words’ (quoted in Koselleck 1989: 657). It is because of the limited store of vocabulary that various forms of political economy, whether socialist, capitalist, state centered, market centered, could all accommodate within one concept – development.

## 6.7 Language and sociopolitical concepts

Discussing the relation between language and history *in actu*, Koselleck (1989) writes that language is elastic and can accommodate diverse human experiences. New experiences are folded into available language. A new experience does not always entail a new linguistic innovation, although there are some exceptions (ibid: 661). As a result, political debates tend to center on particular concepts, particular spoken and written discourse. But this discourse and these concepts are always influenced by past historical experiences. Concepts and language have within them limited options with which to explain an event. These options are historically sedimented since language changes slower than sociopolitical events. Therefore, history in the process of actually happening is conditioned by language. What is the significance of this elaboration? This relation between language and history *in actu* reveals that the multitudes of sociopolitical events that have been condensed into language and into concepts restrict the actual event. An event of historical significance, no matter its uniqueness, will always be explicable under certain rubrics that have been historically assembled. The importance of studying concepts historically is that it is able to bring to light the variety of possibilities that existed when an event was in the process of happening and the outcome of the event *ex post* since concepts are studied synchronically and diachronically.<sup>81</sup>

If so, what about the case of development during the ‘People’s War’? To recall, the CPN (M) was in favor of ‘true’ Marxist interpretations of development-as-process and against ‘distortions’ that prioritized development as NGO-driven intervention in the heydays of the war. This was substantiated with reprimands against foreign-aided development. However, there were occasions when development as interventionist development based on planning, ‘self-reliance’ and spatial development cohabited with development as a long-drawn historical process.

The end of the decade-long conflict in Nepal did not result in the CPN (M) capturing the state as had occurred in China or the Soviet Union. Instead, the state was able to co-opt the revolutionary CPN (M). However, in co-opting the revolutionaries, the nature of the state itself underwent visible changes. The state introduced affirmative action such as quotas to marginalized social groups in government services, introduced proportional electoral system into the first-past-the-post electoral system, incorporated former combatants into the Nepal Army, transformed from a Hindu kingdom to a secular republic and from a unitary to federal structure. These changes, championed by the CPN (M), were eventually accepted by mainstream political parties and incorporated into the new constitution of 2015.<sup>82</sup> While the erstwhile revolutionaries were able to significantly alter the nature of the state, they were not able

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<sup>81</sup> To elaborate this point, Koselleck discusses French, German and British debates on voting rights since the French Revolution as examples of the different linguistic ways to introduce ‘democratization’ or ‘the growing participation of an increasing number of groups in the process of legislation and in the exercise of political power’ (1989: 658). He argues that the process and the semantics of ‘democratization’ were different in the three countries. In spite of this, it was ‘democratization’ for all three instead of three separate words or concepts. This is because, he claims, language changes at a slower pace than sociopolitical events.

<sup>82</sup> I would like to thank Sudhindra Sharma for emphasizing these aspects.

to maneuver the state towards socialist aspirations and the politico-economy of Nepal was not remolded according to Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology that the party had initially fought for. In turn, the concept of development was unassociated with the CPN (M)'s ideological legacy. Development remained tied to popular, 'bourgeoisie' notions of development as 'economic development' or as interventionist foreign-aid economic growth tied to popular trends brought over to Nepal by development practitioners. How was the CPN (M) able to accommodate with a version of development that it had earlier derided? Koselleck has the answer in a rather lengthy paragraph. He writes,

The number of words is limited whereas the contents that can be expressed by them – ideas, people, objects, possibilities, realities – are potentially unlimited. Syntax and semantics, too, are limited – hence their enduring stability. To that extent, the repeatability of experiential propositions that have been formulated at one time or the other in history...can outlast the events that occasioned them and that have become a part of history.... Semantics has a slower rate of change than the events themselves. The linguistic formulation of a uniquely grasped experience prevents it from undergoing the radicle alteration that we are familiar with in the history of events.

This thesis can be corroborated if we direct our attention to some concrete speech acts in specific languages. It then becomes clear that language does not simply store experiences that outlast the specific situation: we realize that particular languages delimit these very experiences. As a consequence of their own concreteness, these languages allow experiences to be formulated only in certain ways and not otherwise. (ibid: 657)

To summarize, socio-political concepts are consistent and repeatable even when 'they help to ground completely different programs of action' (ibid: 660). Here, then, is the answer to how the post-war CPN (M) accommodated to 'bourgeoisie' political language. It was able to do so because, as a concept, development is repeatable. The repeatability makes it open to vastly different interpretations and thus renders the concept ambiguous. The repeatability stems from the 'concreteness' of language that limits events and ideas of varied hues into a small pool of available vocabulary. A party that started out by projecting development as Marxist 'stages of development' was, as it transformed into mainstream politics, able to revert to 'economic development' because of this repeatability. It also helped that 'economic development' was free from ideological references to socialism or capitalism. This is exemplified in Baburam Bhattarai's 2008 budget speech as finance minister of the CPN (M) government after the party's victory in the constituent assembly elections the same year.<sup>83</sup> In this speech, one notices the separation between Bhattarai as erstwhile ideologue of the CPN (M), and therefore responsible for upholding the party's Marxist-Leninist-Maoist worldview, as against his transformation into finance minister who engages with 'economic development' without veering into ideological deliberations. Subscribing to popular interpretations of development (which was free of obvious ideological burden and hence appeared neutral) and muting its socialist goals, even if temporarily, was a part of the CPN (M)'s efforts to stabilize its transition from revolutionaries to an open competitive politics.

## 6.8 Conclusion

With the 'People's War' as its backdrop, this chapter has explored the writings of the CPN (M) in order to explore the fate of political language once it was democratized in the 1990s. It argues that the 'People's War' did not result in a departure from popular political vocabulary but was an attempt at

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<sup>83</sup> <http://www.mof.gov.np>

remolding existing ones to fit Maoist worldview.<sup>84</sup> Conceptually, between 1996 and 2006, Maoist vocabulary was confined to prevailing concepts such as development, progress, and feudalism. In particular, the concept of development was not replaced by neologism. Semantically, it fluctuated between old definitions and redefinitions.

For the CPN (M), development carried two meanings. The first was the Marxist association with societal evolution – a process in which society evolved from lower stages of forces and relations of production to higher, advanced stages. The second was development as economic growth. Although the party paid homage to the first and more Marxist connotation, it could not avoid popular connotations.

Concepts are semantically capacious and mean many things to many people. They are flexible and repeatable; the same concept can speak to and speak on behalf of seemingly different contexts or ideologies. Hence, it is no surprise that in spite of the CPN (M)'s attempts to redefine development and to distance from 'bourgeoisie' versions, once the war was over it ended up adopting the very version it had critiqued. Such an adjustment was possible because 'economic development' was more neutral and more ambiguous than its Marxist alternative and was therefore able to assist this extremist party's entry into competitive multi-party system. What does this tell about Nepali society?

If Western society emerged from industrialization as a more or less egalitarian society, Western concepts such as development epitomized these egalitarian, liberal values. Nepal, in spite of the adoption of Western socio-political concepts guided by liberal values, is not a product of industrialization. Hence, while Nepal has borrowed concepts such as development, the social structure in which these borrowed concepts operate favors hierarchy instead of individualist tendencies. This is not to say that Nepali society has remained stagnant and hierarchical – Nepal's constitutional developments since the 1990s being a laudable example of the move towards an open, accommodative society. Similarly, the 'People's war' is part of an ongoing struggle to create such a representative society. What is perhaps unique to Nepal is the deepening of democracy in spite of the predominantly hierarchical, non-individualist predispositions. The dispersal of political language from urban elite confines to a diffuse but politically aware and articulate citizenry by the late 1990s signals the deepening of democracy. That democracy continues to foster is a sign of the loosening grip of hierarchy, a hierarchy that is being challenged by ambiguous sociopolitical concepts that drive public imagination to counter the hierarchical reality. As part of the political language, *bikās*, an assortment of political and economic goals, facilitates that deepening of democracy.

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<sup>84</sup> The only significant minting that occurred after the end of the Maoist war was the concept *loktantra* (democracy). A cursory surmise would assign *loktantra* to be the result of a similar outcome as that of *pragati* of the 1950s – the need felt by the Nepal Praja Parishad to distance itself from the more popular *unnati*, a word associated strongly with the Rana-era vocabulary. Similarly, the concept *loktantra* appears to be the results of the Maoist's attempt to distance itself from the popular *prajātantra* (also meaning democracy) that was associated with the 1990s movement against the Panchayat and the establishment of parliamentary democracy, the latter being criticized by the Maoists who had demanded elections to a constituent assembly. However, this surmise warrants a more detailed study.

## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

This is a history of the concept of *bikās* spanning a century from the late Rana era to the more recent Maoist civil war during which Nepal has witnessed political convulsions or ‘revolutions’ more than once. This study finds that each political upheaval – the end of Rana rule in 1951, the beginning of the Panchayat in 1961, the reinstatement of parliamentary democracy in 1990 or the decade of the Maoist war – has left its imprint on the concept of *bikās* such that *bikās* is an ambiguous and abstract concept that cannot be condensed into a specific definition. It is because of this ambiguity that *bikās* has been able to fit into many molds over the century.

Nevertheless, this study is an attempt to understand and explain some of that ambiguity. It is an attempt to unravel the politico-historical imprints left upon *bikās* by aligning the concept to context. An exclusively linguistic examination can ameliorate some of the ambiguity by revealing the changes and persistence in the semantics of *bikās*. Conceptual history such as this goes a step ahead in that it examines the semantics of *bikās* and its parallels such as *unnati* and *pragati* at specific moments in history as well as over a long historical period. By aligning concept to context, *bikās* not only becomes a repository of semantics from the past and the present but also a repository of socio-structural transformations.

As such, this study finds that the ambiguity of *bikās* corresponds to the pace of politicization (*rājnitik sacetanā*) of Nepali society. Over the decades, as political language became accessible to a greater number of people due to a gradual spread of democracy, the uses and meanings of political vocabulary expanded such that *bikās* ceased to be specific. The spread of political language and the increasing ambiguity of *bikās* is part of socio-structural changes.

The main conclusions are:

- As a modern political concept, the genealogy of *bikās* is Western. *Bikās* is a translation of the Western concept of development.
- Just as its Western counterpart, *bikās* is a concept that speaks of the future. *Bikās* is also repeatable, as is typical of concepts. This is why, regardless of the many regime changes and their individual political and social agendas, *bikās* has stood as the sociopolitical goal common across regimes since the 1950s. It can be applied repeatedly to different programs of action and continue to remain relevant.
- In Nepal, every political transition increased the accessibility of political language among the non-elites. As part of the political language, *bikās* could occupy the vocabulary and the imagination of the ruling class as well as of people that were not directly involved in politics.
- In coloring the language and the imaginations of the people, the concept of *bikās* facilitated the deepening of democracy while simultaneously destabilizing Nepal’s hierarchical status.
- As such, the concept of *bikās* continues to enlarge the fracture between social structures tied to hierarchy and social values that are guided by liberal principles.

### 7.1 Summary of findings

#### 7.1.1 Parallel notions of *sabhyatā* and *unnati*

According to *Begriffsgeschichte*, conceptual history does not confine to one particular concept but also takes into consideration those ‘parallel’ concepts that complement or contradict it. Therefore, this study began with a discussion of the pre-*bikās* notions of *sabhyatā* and *unnati* during the second half of the Rana regime. Such pre-*bikās* notions come close to Koselleck’s parallel concepts. It has argued that Rana-era notions of *unnati* and ‘development’ were a response to encounters with *sabhya* (civilized)

societies. They were part of a thriving discourse that defined and compared the people of Nepal with the *sabhyā* world following the country's early encounters with the West.

The Rana prime minister Jang Bahadur's journey to England was the first direct encounter with Western *sabhyatā* and one that was to influence the Gurkha kingdom's perceptions of itself as well as the world outside its border and to comparisons and emulations in the name of *sabhyatā*. Such influence became stronger during the reign of two Rana prime ministers – Chandra Shamsher and Juddha Shamsher. Imprints of Western *sabhyatā* are evident in Chandra Shamsher's speech abolishing slavery, which is revelatory not only of the prime minister's attempts to emulate Western *sabhyatā* but the complexities of such an attempt as well. Similarly, Juddha Shamsher's 'industrial development' was stimulated by the presence of a powerful and *unnat* (progressive) neighbor – the British in India. By the time Juddha was contemplating Nepal's industrialization, the *sabhyatā* discourse had expanded to include the notions of *unnati* (progress) and 'development'. Parallel notions of *sabhyatā*, *unnati* and 'industrial development' are examples of the earliest borrowing of ideas as well as language from Western *sabhyatā*.

In Rana Nepal, 'development' was used specifically to refer to industries and the economy. Development was measurable and centered upon short-term achievements garnered through industrialization. However, 'development' was not an 'invention' to counter social disorder resulting from the 'progress' of industrialization, as some have argued of the Western case. Rather, Nepali society of the pre-democratic era was conscious of societies which it considered more civilized than itself. The parallel ideas examined here were the results of contacts and comparisons with such societies, which led to positive identification and to appraisal of the Nepali *jāti*. It was *sabhyatā* differences that propelled Rana-era Nepal to emulate the West and its calibrations based on economic prosperity, since, by the late Rana period, the West prized secular ideas over religious notions. In choosing to calibrate the future in economic instead of religious terms, Nepal's pre-*bikās* notions reveal some affinity with Koselleck's thesis that argues that sociopolitical concept such as progress and development arise at periods of transition when a cyclical future gives way to a linear future. The Ranas and their opponents had begun to project Nepal's future in terms of a linear growth based on *unnati* and 'industrial development'. However, such a projection did not arise from a direct contention between religious and secular interpretations of the future but from *jāti* differences. Unlike the West, Nepal's pre-*bikās* notions were the result of *jāti* differences.

### **7.1.2 Beginnings of the *bikās* discourse**

The political changes of 1951 witnessed the emergence of new institutions and actors such as political parties, legislature, judiciary and bureaucracy. To this was added the entry of foreigners and the accompanying 'development' apparatus. This diverse conglomeration resulted in political language that was quite different from that of the Rana era. The decade of the fifties saw a gradual distancing from the Rana-era *unnati* and towards a greater use of *bikās*. However, *bikās* did not replace *unnati* in one jagged tear. It appeared alongside the then hegemonic *unnati* as an annex until the mid-fifties and was also interspersed with *pragati*. It was the hullabaloo of 'planned development' that resulted in the ascendancy of *bikās*.

The earliest *bikās* discourse is associated with development as espoused by the earliest American aid program to Nepal, the United States Operation Mission (USOM), which associated development with rapid, short-term material gains, bolstered by the political momentum of democracy. However, the Nepali protagonists of the 1950s gave a greater emphasis to the material components of development than to its political associations with democracy. In Nepal, *bikās* had come to mean a particular kind of

development, one that was tied to the then dominant belief in economic growth. Additionally, *bikās* was supposedly neutral. It was unconnected to any political, moral, spiritual or philosophical strain.

In the 1950s, *bikās* encapsulated the divergence between rapid political changes and halting socioeconomic transformations. This incongruity is spelled out in the land reform initiatives of the fifties and some of the works of the Nepali Congress leader B.P. Koirala. The role of *bikās* lay in blurring these contradictions between political changes and halting socioeconomic ones by being semantically expansive. This was assisted by the simultaneous proliferation of the English word ‘development’ in the aid discourse in the 1950s championed by the American aid program. However, *bikās* was not yet a concept in the Koselleckian sense.

This is because Nepal did not witness a democratic spread of previously aristocratic vocabulary. *Bikās* became part of the vocabulary of the upper crust that were, post 1951, able to occupy plural socioeconomic positions which could be simultaneously ‘modern’ and ‘traditional’. This plurality was assisted by capacious political concepts which allowed an individual to float from one position to the other. However, socioeconomic plurality was not yet possible for the vast majority of Nepalis. Owing to the lag between accelerated political changes and slow socioeconomic transformations, a limited number of socioeconomic pluralities were opening up for the upper crust, but the majority of the populace was still bound to hierarchy. Modern values and modern political concepts were not the reality of this majority. Instead, it was hierarchy that ordered their reality, a hierarchy that hindered them from embracing political language. In the 1950s, *bikās* was limited to the political language of the upper crust, a language that was not democratized, that did not belong to everybody.

### 7.1.3 Constructing *bikās* as native

Since *bikās* had strong ‘outside’ influences, particularly from USOM to Nepal, it was not a native concept, although it represented native concerns. However, the Panchayat regime that succeeded the 1950s was extremely sensitive to claims of nativity and Nepali-ness. As a result, *bikās* as planned economic growth existed alongside *bikās* as *grām bikās*. While the first was a continuation of the 1950s, the second was claimed to be typical to the Panchayat system and therefore native.

Written sources from the early Panchayat years persistently associate *grām bikās* with ancient Hindu traditions, traditions that are ‘inner’ as opposed to ‘outer’, ‘Western’ spheres of influence. Unlike the claims to nativity, however, the Panchayat’s *grām bikās* had antecedence in the 1950s rather than in Hindu philosophy. Its *grām bikās* was inspired by Indian socialist thought, particularly the works of Jayaprakash Narayan’s Panchayati Raj based on ‘democratic decentralization’.

The Panchayat was a partyless system that deliberately arrested the democratic momentum of the fifties. Direct rule by the king went counter to political values imbibed by the small but expanding network of urban dwelling, educated citizens. It is from this limited pool of politically active members that the Panchayat drew its first-generation supporters who had initially apprenticed with the Nepali Congress, which, in turn, had supported parliamentary democracy. With this background, first-generation Panchayat members transposed a socialist *grām bikās* into Nepal in the garb of a Hindu *grām bikās* and fulfilled the dual purpose of loyalty to a Hindu monarch as well as to the democratic spirit which had initially sparked their political careers. The second-generation Panchayat members were not encumbered by past associations with democratic politics. For them, direct rule by the king was not contradictory to their political beliefs. Hence, *bikās* as *grām bikās* gradually lost its purpose – that of defining development as well as asserting democracy. *Grām bikās* was replaced by *bikās* as planned economic growth.

Although the three decades of monarchial rule gives the appearance of political stability, it was during these three decades that a regime projecting itself as the confluence of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’



counterproductively became a wedge dividing the two. The projected confluence was unable to survive because of the incongruity between Hinduism as the inner domain on the one hand and modern political aspirations on the other. *Bikās* as modernity in the Panchayat period was divorced from *bikās* as Hinduized *grām bikās*. The duality of *bikās* during the Panchayat is a reflection of a society in transition, one that perched unsteadily on a supposedly traditional philosophy but one that could not avoid being drawn towards sociopolitical forms other than its tradition.

#### **7.1.4 *Bikās* as a concept**

The 1990s witnessed two separate kinds of transformations: the first was an accelerated regime change and the second was a gradual structural transformation. An accelerated political change began with the abrogation of the Panchayat system and the formation of an interim government in April 1990, followed by parliamentary election and drafting a new constitution. Such an accelerated political change provided the impetus to political plurality and to the spread of political consciousness outside traditional circles of political elites. This awakening of political consciousness among previously marginalized social segments was a gradual process.

What was specific to the 1990s was the politicization of the non-elites. Political membership drew from diverse social strata differentiated along caste, class, gender, religion, region and ethnic lines than it had in the fifties. This, in turn, was partly a result of the expansion of education, land reforms, changing class relations and migration. These factors not only invigorated citizens' claims to ethnic, regional, religious, linguistic and gender sensitive treatments from a democratic state but also required that the claims be articulated through political vocabulary. As a result, the users of political vocabulary quickly expanded in the 1990s. *Bikās*, as part of this vocabulary, exhibited the Koselleckian parameters of democratization and, in turn, to the metamorphosis of *bikās* into a concept. Prominent actors of the 1990s such as the state, the political parties and the I/NGO's responded to the emerging social plurality in specific ways.

The manifesto of the CPN (UML) and the NC reveal that they were aware of the rising political consciousness of the people. Political language and political concepts became available to people who were gradually transforming from citizens with limited political rights to citizens with greater rights to participate in the democratic process. Political language did not remain the exclusive possession of the political class. Hence, their manifesto speaks to and speaks on behalf of motley of social and economic categories, or *barga*.

Unlike the political parties, the state was less sensitive to the social plurality that became pronounced post 1990. Apart from its role as the authority from which various socioeconomic policies stem or, more broadly, as facilitator of economic growth, the state displayed little regard for the contradictions arising from an accelerated political transformation minus the accompanying socioeconomic transformation. Preoccupied with its agency, the Nepali state was not very successful in taking cognizance of the gradual structural transformations and, in turn, to the plural, politically assertive and articulate citizen that arose following the restoration of democracy. While the state promulgated land reforms, promoted the expansion of education and invested in infrastructure and urban expansion, it failed to look beyond the short-term, mostly economic impact of such measures.

The I/NGOs were embedded in the process of societal transformation. They were part of the landscape of a transforming society that was opening up and receptive to plural positions and ideas. There existed a two-way exchange between the agency of the I/NGOs and the structural transformations underway in Nepali society, each influencing and responding to the other. Through their role as disseminator of knowledge, the I/NGOs were contributing to the creation of an open, accommodative society.

Simultaneously, it was the plasticity of the post 1950s which amplified in the 1990s that opened up spaces in which external bodies such as I/NGOs could operate.

In Nepal, it is after the restoration of democracy that basic sociopolitical concepts became accessible to those not directly involved in politics. However, such accessibility was made possible while largely remaining entrenched in hierarchy. Hence, while democratic values and modern political concepts were occupying the imaginations of the people, it accentuated the incompatibility between values professed by the agents of change – the state, the political parties and the international bodies – and everyday realities of the people. While amplifying such contradictions, the role of political concepts such as *bikās* lay in cementing the mismatch between accelerated political changes and the less radical structural changes. But the paradox of a politicized mass entrenched in a largely un-egalitarian society continued. While *bikās* was expounded as a panacea, by percolating into everyday language, it also contributed in making structural contradictions acutely visible.

### **7.1.5 An alternative *bikās***

During the decade-long ‘People’s War’, the Maoists did not depart from popular political vocabulary but attempted to remold existing ones to fit Marxist worldviews. Conceptually, between 1996 and 2006, Maoist vocabulary was confined to prevailing concepts such as development, progress, and feudalism. In particular, the concept of development was not replaced by neologism but fluctuated between old definitions and redefinitions.

For the Maoists, development carried two meanings. The first was the Marxist association with societal evolution – a process in which society evolved from lower stages of forces and relations of production to higher, advanced stages. The second was development as economic growth. Although the party paid homage to the first and more Marxist connotation, it could not avoid the second connotation.

The party attempted to distance from popular notions of development. Such an attempt was visible in the ideologue Baburam Bhattarai’s work on Nepal’s underdevelopment where he deemed the entire corpus of Marxist literature inadequate in understanding the causes of underdevelopment of countries such as Nepal that was never colonized. He claimed that Kathmandu and certain pockets in the Tarai are more ‘developed’ in terms of the productive forces while the majority of the country stagnated in underdevelopment because of its geography, its ‘spatial’ character.

However, Bhattarai and his party were unable to disregard popular versions of ‘economic development’. Although economic development was synonymous with capitalist economy and was established within ‘bourgeoisie’ vocabulary since the 1990s, for the Maoists, economic development had meant capitalism only under conditions that it led to socialism as directed by the party’s New Democratic system. The suspension of the party’s New Democracy in 2006 meant that economic development as laid out by the ‘comprador bureaucratic classes’ had to be accepted, even if grudgingly. In the immediate post-war period, the CPN (M) abandoned interpretations of development as ‘stages of development’ for the more popular economic connotations.

In spite of the Maoists being antagonistic towards popular definitions of *bikās* during the war, a reversal to popular meanings post the war was possible due to the elasticity of political concepts. As a sociopolitical concept, development is repeatable. The same concept can speak to and speak on behalf of seemingly different contexts or ideologies. Hence, it is no surprise that in spite of the CPN (M)’s attempts to redefine development and to distance from ‘bourgeoisie’ versions, once the war was over it ended up adopting the very version it had critiqued. Such an adjustment was possible because ‘economic development’ was more neutral compared to its Marxist alternative and was able to assist this extremist party’s entry into competitive multi-party system. Since concepts are semantically capacious and mean

many things to many people, the CPN (M) ended up adopting the very version of development it had critiqued during the war.

## 7.2 The methodological and theoretical questions raised by *Begriffsgeschichte*

In this study, an attempt has been made to follow the theoretical and methodological foundations as laid down by *Begriffsgeschichte*. Methodologically, it has examined *bikās*, Nepali translation for development, synchronically as well as diachronically. It has occasionally diverted towards the parallels of *bikās* such as *sabhyatā*, *unnati* and *pragati*. It has drawn from a wide selection of source materials in the lingua franca as well as in English to trace the evolution of the word into a concept. Theoretically, this study has partially borrowed from Koselleck's claim that the *Sattelzeit* is the vortex of linguistic and conceptual innovations and dynamism. However, taking the country's historical and political specificities into account, Nepal's transformations are not captured by a single, revolutionary, epic *Sattelzeit* as in the German case but are spread out across the last century with high points during the 1950s, the 1990s and the Maoist war years. Nepal's sociopolitical transformations are in no way similar to Koselleck's *Sattelzeit*, but his thesis provides an entry point to exploring the shifting meanings of concepts in societies undergoing transformations and, in turn, to the relation between concepts and transformations. However, the theoretical and methodological premises of *Begriffsgeschichte* have raised a few questions (Sheehan 1978; Coleman 1999; Richter 2005; Palonen 1997, 1999). The following section will summarize the common methodological and theoretical queries spelled out in the above works along with discussions on how this study has engaged with the queries.

### 7.2.1 On methods

The main questions pertain to

- The problem of establishing synchrony and diachrony,
- The problem of parallel concepts,
- The problem of source selection, and
- The problem of translation.

Sheehan (1978) and Coleman (1999) are pertinent in terms of methods, particularly in terms of the three premises of diachrony and synchrony, parallel concepts and sources. Sheehan's review of the *GG* looks at the 'problems and possibilities of 'diachronic analysis of concepts' by discussing 'the *Begriff* as a unit of analysis, the problem of meaning and the relationship between language and its historical context' (Sheehan 1978: 314). Sheehan argues that not all the contributors to the *GG* are successful in tracing a concept's diachronic evolution because the concept they choose overlap with other concepts and so are difficult to treat as single, circumscribed and whole. Secondly, Sheehan argues that some of the contributing articles in the *GG* fail to trace a concept's semantic variety in their search for the most 'representative' texts. Finally, Sheehan criticizes the contributors for removing concepts from their political context, making it difficult to establish diachrony.

Janet Coleman's paper contains some deliberations on the nature of parallel concepts and on source selection. Coleman's understanding of parallel concepts is rather different and, if I may add, incorrect from Koselleck's proposition. Coleman writes, 'Koselleck affirms that expressions are multiple but it seems that concepts get transformed diachronically only through polar opposition...that humans only have limited perspectives on things and they achieve self-definition as it emerges through distinguishing who is in and who is out...framed by the polarities of either/or, good/bad, Hellene/barbarian' (Coleman 1999: 31–32). She also questions *Begriffsgeschichte*'s criteria of source selection and the proposal to integrate concepts and their parallels into a 'narrative which adequately reconstructs an integrated political and social vocabulary' (ibid: 39).

Sheehan and Coleman agree on the disputability of parallel concepts. While Sheehan considers ‘overlapping’ concepts to dilute the possibility of establishing diachrony, Coleman sees parallel concepts as isolated units that have not been brought together into an integrated narrative of political language. Sheehan provides a remedy in the form of assembling parallel concepts together instead of studying each concept and its parallels independently. Perhaps these queries stem from the lexical arrangement of the *GG*. However, as Koselleck’s translated works such as *Crisis* (2006), *Emancipation* (2002) and *Progress* (2002) discuss, the role of parallel concepts is to provide a picture of political and socioeconomic alternatives that get submerged under the rising tide of the dominant concept.

To these comments, I would add, based on my study of *bikās*, that Koselleck’s parallel concepts are not necessarily concepts but words. As a result, this study has, all along, hesitated to denote parallels such as *unnati*, *pragati* and *sabhyatā* concepts. While the English word progress is certainly a concept, to what extent are its Nepali translations *unnati* and *pragati* concepts when used in the pre-1950s and immediate 1950s? This is a difficult question that can be answered only if these Nepali words are studied independently of *bikās*, with *bikās* being a parallel as and when it appears. The problem posed by *sabhyatā*, civilization, is no different. In order to establish it as a modern political concept, a study that encompasses a diachronic sweep across political regimes is essential. Here *sabhyatā* is only a parallel up to the 1940s but is obliterated once the democracy and development discourses ascended the political vocabulary globally. While Sheehan’s suggestion certainly is fruitful and answers Coleman’s query of how an integrated narrative of political vocabulary can be established, it does not diminish the importance of studies that focus on single concepts which are adjoined and enriched by parallel words such as this study has attempted.

Sheehan and Coleman also raise some important questions on the nature of sources used in *Begriffsgeschichte* which, although extensive, can end up being partial to ‘representative’ texts and voices and hence exclude the atypical and also become ineffective in establishing synchrony. This, however, is not the dilemma of *Begriffsgeschichte* alone but that of most historical studies. What *Begriffsgeschichte* proposes in order to avoid such a partiality, and what the many contributors to the *GG* perhaps do not succeed in applying, is to include as many atypical sources as possible. It does not propose exclusivity to canonical texts. As Melvin Richter succinctly points out, ‘as a method, this calls attention not only to great theorists, but also to the other sites and media where political controversies are and have been conducted (Richter 2005: 10).

This study has attempted to deal with sources as varied as possible. It has drawn from newspapers and magazines, grey literature, dictionaries and secondary literature along with what Coleman calls ‘representative’ sources, which, in the Nepali case, correspond to institutional literature produced by various state and non-state bodies. Therefore, an attempt has been made to veer away from ‘representative’ cases and towards capturing the variety emerging from the ‘literate public’ as Sheehan suggests. What are the pros and cons presented by such a study that relies on a variety of sources, both typical and atypical, for synchrony as well as diachrony?

The sociopolitical concept of *bikās* is an ambiguous assortment of meanings synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, *bikās* was contested between ambiguous definitions pertaining to planned growth and alternatives based on an invented nativity or Marxist rationale. Although the alternatives appear not to outlive the political period to which they belonged, they, in fact, do not completely disappear but survive as historical layers of *bikās*. It is due to source variety and the interplay of synchrony and diachrony that one is able to trace persistence and changes in the concept diachronically while also witnessing alternatives at every synchronic pause – alternatives that would otherwise remain eclipsed were it not for synchrony. The role of the alternatives, in spite of their apparent defeat in the face of dominant or typical interpretations, lies in the ability to push the

boundaries of *bikās* towards many possibilities such that it was no longer a word with an exact meaning but an elastic concept that could accommodate both persistent and episodic definitions. However, it must be mentioned that Coleman is correct in pointing out that a comprehensive synchrony or diachrony is never possible since the researcher is only able to use a small fragment of what survives historically. *Begriffsgeschichte* is not a comprehensive account of all uses of a concept but only an estimate of the variety that exists (Sheehan 1978: 316).

Another important methodological concern – the translation and reception of concepts from one to another completely different culture – is raised by Richter (2005). Based on his study of the reception of Western concepts into Chinese, Richter argues that borrowed concepts can never be accurately translated into the recipient language. Rather, a translated concept arises from partial understanding and misunderstanding of the original Western concept. However, *Begriffsgeschichte* does not address this concern since it was limited to analyzing German concepts and not to cross-cultural concepts.

Nevertheless, cross-cultural translation raises two methodological issues: firstly, what constitutes a concept in the English language may not, when translated into the recipient language, constitute a concept despite the availability of a translatable word, as the Nepali cases of *pragati* and *unnati* display. As has been stated earlier, while progress is a concept, to what extent are *unnati* and *pragati* concepts? While relying on Koselleck's definition of concept prevents the possibility of erroneously assigning words as concepts, this study has proceeded from the English concept of development into the Nepali *bikās* and its parallels and not in the reverse direction, i.e., this study did not begin by asking what the concept of *bikās* meant but how development was understood in Nepal. Since development is translated as *bikās* and only as *bikās*, the possibility of mistranslation does not occur. Since *bikās* is an established concept (*avadhāraṇā*) even in the Nepali language, there was no question of first ascertaining whether *bikās*, like its English translation development, was or was not a concept in the Koselleckian sense. With this established certainty, the study proceeded to explore when and how *bikās* evolved into a concept in Nepali.

However, other Nepali concepts may not be so straightforward. For instance, *sabhyatā*, which is discussed in the second chapter, raises questions such as the extent to which it is related to the civilizational discourse of the West. Although civilization is translated as *sabhyatā* and although civilization is a concept, to what extent is *sabhyatā* a concept? Additionally, since Nepal's *sabhyatā* discourse was a response to a set of circumstances that was different from those of the West, to what extent do the English civilization and the translated *sabhyatā* talk to and talk past each other? Here the questions and propositions discussed earlier by Melvin Richter are relevant. However, before proceeding to explore when and how *sabhyatā* evolved into a concept, a preliminary examination is required to ascertain that *sabhyatā* is a concept. If ambiguity is the hallmark of concepts, the question that emerges is how to ascertain this ambiguity in translated vocabulary even prior to commencement of a conceptual history of non-Western vocabulary?

The other methodological issue pertaining to translation is the kind of conceptual history that does not proceed from Western concepts translated into a recipient language but the reverse. In other words, what becomes peculiar Nepali concepts whether or not they are translatable into English?<sup>85</sup> The concept of *dharma* (roughly, religion), *dharma nirapekṣatā* (roughly, secularism), *rājyābhiṣek* (roughly, coronation), *des*, *muluk* and *rājya* (various concepts corresponding to country, nation, state) are not exactly translatable into the English language and have to be understood in their South Asian, Hindu or

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<sup>85</sup> See Richter (1997) for discussions on *Begriffsgeschichte* and comparative inquiry.

Hinduized context. Looking for an English translation will only take one as far as a rough estimation.<sup>86</sup> How would such a conceptual history proceed? For then, the theoretical basis of the *Sattelzeit*, or a period of sociopolitical upheaval in which modern political concepts were minted, will be invalid since for these South Asian concepts the demarcations of modern and pre-modern are not very helpful. Although this study is unable to answer this question, perhaps studies in the future that examine non-Western concepts will have some answers.

### 7.2.2. *On theory*

The main questions pertain to

- *Begriffsgeschichte*'s hypothesis about the *Sattelzeit* driving conceptual changes, and
- The relation between concepts and long drawn structural changes.

Melvin Richter summarizes an unresolved theoretical issue of *Begriffsgeschichte* in the following words,

Although the *GG*'s introduction sets out a number of hypotheses about change in political and social concepts, the work contains no analysis of its findings. More than twenty-five years of research and seventy thousand pages of findings are or soon will be available to those seeking to answer the question posed when this project was undertaken. Certainly the first order of priority is to make a systematic assessment of the extent to which the studies now available in the *GG* confirm, disconfirm, or confirm in part the *GG*'s hypothesis about the nature of conceptual change during the *Sattelzeit*. (Richter: 1997: 14)

In other words, does the behavior of concepts before, during and after the *Sattelzeit* follow the hypothesis laid down in the *GG*? Triggered by the *Sattelzeit*, do concepts move from a natural to a historical time triggering either or all of the four processes mentioned by Koselleck? Additionally, to what extent is the *Sattelzeit* responsible for this move? And to what extent does tracing the changing use of concepts past the *Sattelzeit* help understand structural transformations?

As discussed in chapter one, Nepal did not witness anything akin to the German *Sattelzeit*. Hence, before retrospectively answering the above questions, it is essential to state that *Sattelzeit* is not the precondition for this conceptual history of *bikās*. However, since the theoretical basis of *Begriffsgeschichte* is the *Sattelzeit*, does a conceptual history in the absence of a *Sattelzeit* undermine the entire program set out by Koselleck and his colleagues? No, it does not. The non-colonial context of Nepal has presented a unique case in which to examine the reception of a Western concept regardless of the absence of the fundamental theoretical premise of the *GG*.

As the findings of this study reveal, the concept of *bikās* is a response to what Koselleck calls a move from natural to historical time. However, in Nepal, this move towards a historical time, towards an open-ended future, was not the result of an accelerated socio-structural transformation like that in Europe after the French Revolution. As a concept enshrining the open-ended abyss of historical time, the concept of *bikās* was and continues to be a result of gradual, often slow-paced, socio-structural outcome that sprouted after torrential political rainstorms or 'movements'. Therefore, it can be said that

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<sup>86</sup> The problem of misplaced translations is exemplified, for example, by the following statement by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, thrice prime minister of India, on secularism. He states, 'They who interpret secularism as *dharma-nirapekṣatā* fail to understand either *dharma* or secularism. A secular state does not mean an anti-religious state, nor even an irreligious state. For, in that sense, the people of India just never can become secular. A secular state simply means a state which does not identify itself with any specific mode of worship and holds the balance even between all sects – secularism thus mean *sampradāya nirapekṣatā* and not *dharma-nirapekṣatā*.' Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha Session, Indore, September 7-8, 1968 (<http://ataljee.org/AtalJeeURM/Quotes.html>).

although the modern Western concept of development may have bloomed in its area of origin during and after the *Sattelzeit*, it was transported into the recipient society of Nepal in less revolutionary conditions. The question posed earlier – To what extent is a concept’s move towards a historical time the result of the *Sattelzeit*? – is best answered by stating that in the Nepali case the absence of a revolutionary *Sattelzeit* is compensated by the presence of a lag between rapid political changes minus equally paced socio-structural transformations. It is this lag that generated temporal concepts. Similarly, it is not any *Sattelzeit* but this lag between accelerated political changes and grudging socio-structural changes that triggered the democratization of *bikās* as has been discussed in chapters three and five.

To what extent does tracing the changing uses of concepts help understand structural transformations? This is raised in response to *Begriffsgeschichte*’s additional theoretical claim that ‘the diachronic disposition of component parts reveals long-term structural changes’ (Koselleck: 83) or that concepts direct and in turn are directed by social structural changes. Does *bikās* reveal such a give and take between concept and structural transformations? It does. For the evolution of *bikās* from a word into a concept with ever-expanding porous boundaries was a response to cumulative socio-structural transformations. Socio-structural changes were pushing the political language, of which *bikās* was a part, into a wider and more democratic ownership. The expansion of political language away from the traditional elite cluster and into the non-elite but literate public is an indicator of structural changes. Hence, this study agrees with *Begriffsgeschichte*’s claim that concepts and socio-structural changes are interrelated. However, it considers the hypothesis of the *Sattelzeit* as uncharacteristic to Nepal.

### **7.3 Begriffsgeschichte and non-Western concepts – the problem of temporalization**

According to Koselleck, natural time is distinct from historical time, this distinction being initially articulated by Bacon, Pascal and Fontenelle in the seventeenth century. Natural time is cyclical and characterized by regeneration following degeneration. Historical time is unpredictable, open ended, progressive and embracing change. The rhythm of cyclicity that is typical of rural life is closer to natural time, whereas modern life with its disjunctions sees time as historical. Koselleck emphasizes that this transition from natural to historical time can be observed through a combined synchronic and diachronic approach to modern socio-political concepts which experience a temporal tension in response to the move from natural to historical time.

That concepts exhibit a temporal push towards historical time, what Koselleck calls temporalization of concepts, is true for Western concepts. In the non-Western case, temporalization may be true for translated concepts of progress, liberty, revolution, or development, where, in keeping with the developments of modern Nepal, concepts exhibit a temporal push towards historical time. However, such is not the case for non-Western religious, philosophical concepts such as the ones mentioned earlier. Of course, *Begriffsgeschichte* is not concerned with religious, philosophical concepts but with modern, socio-political ones. In Nepal, however, modern socio-political concepts and religious, philosophical concepts exist alongside one another and may even overlap. These latter concepts are not relics of the past but continue to retain their Hindu connotations while also enriching Nepali political language. They are not confined to religious texts alone but are also a part of Nepali political language. Where do such concepts fit in the scheme of *Begriffsgeschichte*?

A definite answer can only be arrived at by carefully studying their religious-philosophical meanings as well as the current usage in political language. A tentative hypothesis would be that as religious-philosophical concepts, they are topological and not temporal. However, their influx into modern political language, which itself is temporal and forward looking, will have some influence on these religious-philosophical topological concepts. What are these influences and outcomes? What are the similarities and differences between them and those basic political concepts translated from the West?

As units worthy of examination, these religious-philosophical concepts are unique in that they exist in a modern and temporalizing world without completely succumbing to temporality but without remaining exclusively topological as well. What exactly is the nature of such concepts? How adequate are *Begriffsgeschichte*'s theoretical and methodological premise for such a study? The present study cannot answer this. Hopefully, future studies will shed light.

#### **7.4 Research gap**

The democratization of political concepts has brought political language closer to the people. Although it is now part of the vernacular and not exclusive to court language or to the language of the elite, this study does not focus on various social, economic, religious, regional sections of Nepali society. The focus has been on the reception of *bikās* by every new regime and its political class, and as such it is embedded in national political history and the Nepali language. More insights and information could be gained by a conceptual history of *bikās* that answers how democratization opened the political language to influences and modifications by people who are 'beneficiaries' of *bikās*.

However, there exists a paucity of materials on regional political languages and on regional political history. A history of the concept of *bikās* that is broader and more representative will require a conceptual study in which the meanings associated with *bikās* emerge from below and one which will contradict or complement those that have thus far emerged from the mainstream political class. As such, this study could be followed up by a conceptual history of *bikās* that emerges from below. Such a study would not only contribute to the history of political concepts but to an alternative to dominant historical narrative as well.



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## ANNEX: SOURCES USED IN THE STUDY

Period	Documents
1910–1950	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travelogue of the Rana prime minister Jang Bahadur to England and France</li> <li>• Official correspondences between British India and Rana Nepal</li> <li>• Prime minister Chandra Shamsher's slavery abolition speech</li> <li>• Newspaper <i>Tarun Gorkhā</i> and magazine <i>Śāradā</i></li> <li>• Bhim Bahadur Pande's book <i>Tyas Bakhatko Nepāl</i></li> <li>• Surya Bikram Gyawali's book <i>Nepālī Bhāṣāko Vikās ko Saṃkṣipta itihās</i></li> <li>• R.L. Turner's <i>A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language</i></li> <li>• Devi Prasad Kandel's book <i>Trade and Industry of Nepal during the Rana Period</i></li> </ul>
1951–1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official correspondences between British India and Rana Nepal</li> <li>• The newspaper <i>Āvāj</i></li> <li>• Official correspondence of Paul W. Rose</li> <li>• Matrika Prasad Koirala's autobiography, <i>A Role in Revolution</i></li> <li>• Nepal's first Five-year Plan document in English and Nepali</li> <li>• The magazine <i>Vikās</i></li> <li>• Speeches by B.P. Koirala</li> </ul>
1960–1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications by the Ministry of National Directives under the Panchayat system</li> <li>• Compilation of Jayaprakash Narayan's writings in <i>Communitarian Society and the Panchayati Raj</i></li> <li>• King Mahendra's speeches</li> <li>• King Birendra's speeches</li> </ul>
1990–1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Election manifestoes of the Nepali Congress</li> <li>• Election manifestoes of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML)</li> <li>• <i>Dictionary of Classical Newari: Compiled from Manuscript Sources</i></li> <li>• Nepal's Eighth and Ninth Plan documents in English</li> <li>• United Mission in Nepal's annual reports</li> <li>• Biography of Odd Hoftun, <i>Power for Nepal: Odd Hoftun and the History of Hydropower Development</i></li> </ul>
1996–2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political writings of Baburam Bhattarai</li> <li>• Political writings of Pushpa Kamal Dahal</li> <li>• Writings of Chaitanya Mishra</li> <li>• Contemporary literature on the Maoist war in Nepal</li> </ul>

